



## **6: SWEET AND SOUR JESUS (Luke 2:21-38)**

When I was in high school, I had a deep deep deep longing to become a rock star and be able to play music for a living. I wrote songs from the age of ten, learned guitar, bass, and drums, and learned to record myself by the age of thirteen. When I counted recently, I realized I'd written and recorded over three-hundred original songs in my lifetime. I used to dream about playing guitar in front of a stadium crowd full of people, and wake up sad that it wasn't happening yet!

By the time I was into early adulthood, I had a deep deep deep longing to meet the woman of my dreams and get married. I had been through a couple of serious, but disastrous relationships in high school, and I was just hurting to meet the right woman and get our life going.

Currently, I have the longing to just have less complicated things happening in my life! I've got a 21 month old, eight year old, and eleven year old daughter, a dog, a cat, a house built in 1929 with lots of problems, and a super busy job in a tough context in a tough season that was planted by a large church that is totally different from us who we're now moving towards independence from. I'm going through some challenges with my immediate family right now also. I have a longing for things to slow down and ease up as I write this.

**ENGAGE FOR A MOMENT... WHAT IS THE DEEPEST LONGING OF YOUR HEART RIGHT NOW?**

Jesus Christ came into the world and fulfilled the deepest longings of the Universe. Jesus fulfilled the deepest longings of the people of God. Jesus fulfilled the law of God. Jesus can fill up the deepest longing of your heart, also. He might not give you everything you thought you wanted, but He can fulfill us in ways we never thought were possible.

When Jesus showed up in my life, my longing to become a rock star didn't fade out right away, but over time, it was replaced with the desire to use my musical gifts and passions to point people to Him. Now I'm almost forty two years old and I can say that I'm satisfied in Christ to the point where I simply love to be able to play a guitar, bass, or set of drums, or sing during a Sunday worship gathering to connect with God in worship and help His people to connect to Him in worship. I get to do hip hop music with a great variety of urban youth and use it to share the gospel and Kingdom with them. I get to build partnerships with others doing the same thing in the city of Akron. When Jesus became my first love beyond music, He began to use my musicality to bring glory to Him and bring more joy in doing music than I had ever had before.

Jesus became a greater love in my life than my perceived wife of the future. Jesus is also a greater love in my life to both me and my wife. We put Him first. My love for Him happened just in time, because after my heart got tethered to Jesus I met my wife six months later! Because of my relationship with Jesus, my wife Sarah and I's relationship was different than any other right out of the gate. We've sought to make Him the center of our marriage and life, and through any problems or troubles we've had He has been faithful to hold us together and keep drawing us closer to Him and each other. Jesus fulfills...

I'm still waiting on Jesus to slow things down and simplify them in my current life. We'll see! Despite any of the troubles I'm still satisfied in Him and wild about Him! No matter what the world throws at me that remains solid and true!

Straight outta birth, and led by his faithful Israelite parents, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament requirements of the law. Not long after the birth of Christ, In obedience to the law, Joseph and Mary offered a sacrifice to God in the temple.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 2:22–24). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>21</sup> *When the eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus—the name given by the angel before he was conceived.* <sup>22</sup> *And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were finished, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord* <sup>23</sup> *(just as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord)* <sup>24</sup> *and to offer a sacrifice (according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons).* (Luke 2:21-24)

According to the law, Mary had to undergo a time of purification after giving birth<sup>2</sup> This was right in line with Lev 12:1–4, which stated;

*The Lord spoke to Moses:* <sup>2</sup> *“Tell the Israelites: When a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a male child, she will be unclean seven days, as she is during the days of her menstrual impurity.* <sup>3</sup> *The flesh of his foreskin must be circumcised on the eighth day.* <sup>4</sup> *She will continue in purification from her bleeding for thirty-three days. She must not touch any holy thing or go into the sanctuary until completing her days of purification.*

Then, in a separate ceremony from Mary’s purification, Jesus was consecrated.<sup>3</sup> Exod 13:2 & Num 3:13 pointed to this;

<sup>2</sup> *“Consecrate every firstborn male to me, the firstborn from every womb among the Israelites, both man and domestic animal; it is mine.”* (Ex 13:2)

<sup>13</sup> *because every firstborn belongs to me. At the time I struck down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated every firstborn in Israel to myself, both man and animal. They are mine; I am the Lord.”* (Nu 3:13)

Additionally, Mary’s offering, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, was the offering of a poor woman. The law stipulated that a lamb be offered, but if the woman could not afford a lamb then she could offer two turtle doves or pigeons.<sup>4</sup>

*But if she doesn’t have sufficient means for a sheep, she may take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. Then the priest will make atonement on her behalf, and she will be clean.”* (Le 12:8)

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<sup>2</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:22). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>3</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:23). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>4</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:24). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Mary, the Mother of the Messiah, the Savior of the world, could not afford the top shelf offering of a sheep, but more broke than some of her fellow Israelites, she offered what she could afford.

Some of you all think that what you have to offer isn't enough. You don't feel like your finances allow you to be generous enough. You don't have the talent or ability you wish you had. You don't look the way you wish you did. You don't feel the way you wish you did. You don't think the way you wish you did. You weren't born in the situation you wish you were born in. You've been through things that have held you down, traumatized you, discouraged you, and made you believe you're not enough.

Well, God sure saw Mary's meager offering, and thought it was gold. And God sees what you offer to Him, and is blessed by it. He is pleased with you dear brother or sister. He sees your faithfulness. He's gifted you with precious gifts. He says you are beautiful. He says you are dearly beloved. He says "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) He says that He will use your story for His glory. He says that He sent His Son to die for you, and Christ is enough, therefore, in Christ, you are enough, because Christ in you is more than you ever need to be!

Jesus fulfills...

Jesus, even as a newborn infant, fulfilled the longing within the hearts of the wisest of God followers...

While they were at the temple fulfilling the rituals of the OT law, Joseph and his family were introduced to two prophetic figures. The first was Simeon—an elderly prophet to whom God made a promise (see Luke 2:26). Simeon longed to see the arrival of the Messiah; when he finally met Him, he delivered a message of hope and sorrow to Mary and Joseph.<sup>5</sup> Luke 2:25-26 sets up the scene;

*<sup>25</sup> There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. (Luke 2:25-26)*

There is a mysterious communication of divine knowledge to those who walk in quiet, contemplative fellowship with God.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 2:25–35). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>6</sup> Believer's Bible Commentary Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1992, 1995, 2016 by William MacDonald.

May we imitate Simeon's devotion to the Lord of the Universe in our own unique ways. May we be led to take prayer walks, or sit in prayer, or drive our car while in prayer. May we dig deeply into scripture and let it soak into our minds and hearts as we meditate on it. May we stay connected and committed to the community of Christ followers that the Lord has put us in. May we disciple one another by faith. May we be led on a supernatural mission by the Holy Spirit into the lives of those who desperately need salvation and hope, and see Him move.

Our righteousness and our devotion is the righteousness and devotion of Jesus gifted to us. He is good to be with. We are His and He is ours. He is worth spending time with more than anyone else on the planet. Dwelling, like Simeon, in the presence of the Holy Spirit is the place to be!

Simeon was also "looking forward to Israel's consolation". This likely alluded to OT prophecies anticipating a time of redemption for Israel, which would've been signified by an incredible sense of Yahweh's presence (e.g., Isa 40:1–2, 10–11; 61:1–2; compare Luke 2:38). This time of restoration was expected to be accomplished through Yahweh's anointed representative, the Messiah (*christos* in Greek).<sup>7</sup>

We are all looking towards a time of consolation. God will give full consolation through Jesus Christ. He sent Jesus to live a perfect life and then die the death we deserve so that full and complete forgiveness would be downloaded into us. One day, complete consolation will reach fruition! Jesus Christ will return to earth to be King forever! Jesus will wipe out all sin, death, pain, sickness, hatred, enmity, strife, and division forever, and we will be given resurrected bodies that bask in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth forever and ever!

May we hasten His coming! Every urban youth we mentor, every addict we help towards sobriety, every kingdom inspired t-shirt we sell, every hot cup of coffee or warm slice of pizza we give to someone cold, thirsty, or hungry, every warm smile we give, every word of encouragement, every word spoken about our faith and salvation, every bit of wisdom we instill in someone who needs it, every bit of knowledge we teach to someone who will benefit from it, every time we show up on time and do a good job, we are hastening His coming. We are pointing to the eternal Kingdom that He will forever reign in and over!

Back to Simeon's encounter with Christ as an infant;

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<sup>7</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:25). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

*<sup>27</sup> Guided by the Spirit, (Simeon) entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said,*

*<sup>29</sup> Now, Master,  
you can dismiss your servant in peace,  
as you promised.*

*<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation.*

*<sup>31</sup> You have prepared it  
in the presence of all peoples—*

*<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and glory to your people Israel. (Luke 2:27-32)*

This passage comprised the fourth hymn in Luke's birth narratives. It was known as the *Nunc dimittis* because of how the first few words were translated in the Latin Vulgate (the Latin translation of the Bible).<sup>8</sup>

Old man Simeon, whom I'm assuming was a yoda-esque figure of wisdom amongst his generation, lifted up the infant Messiah in his hands...

And by the way, I'm assuming that Mary and Joseph gave Simeon permission to pick up Jesus. Listen y'all- don't pick up people's babies or touch them unless you get permission, ok? 😊

Simeon proclaimed that the Lord could now "dismiss His servant in peace, as He had promised." Remember Luke 2:26 which said *It had been revealed to (Simeon) by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah.* Simeon had had a prophetic encounter with the Spirit of God, and *knew* in his heart of hearts that the Lord would bring the promise given to him to pass. *Simeon's eyes had seen God's salvation.* It was right there, in human form, right before his very eyes!

I wonder when the Holy Spirit had revealed this to Simeon. The text doesn't say. Had it been minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, or years before this moment?

However long it was, God was with Simeon in the waiting. God had given a promise to Simeon, and He would fulfill it in His time. This same God had been all about making promises and refining His people in the waiting period for them! God gave dreams to Joseph that he would hold a position of power and influence, but almost got murdered by his brothers, got sold into slavery, and spent 17 years in prison before it came to

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<sup>8</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:29–32). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



pass. God gave a promise to Abraham that he would have an heir from his own loins, and it took 25 years to fulfill. God revealed that David would overtake Saul as King, but first had to go through many seasons of Saul hunting him down to take his life first.

And some of y'all are waiting on that job to come through, on that significant other to show up in your life, on that infertility to become fertility, on that pregnancy to happen, on that wayward kid to come back to Jesus, on that loved one to be freed of addiction, on that loved one to be healed psychologically, on your sickness to pass, on that loved one to finally do what you'd always hoped they'd do but they haven't done yet, or on that enemy to finally forgive you, or even reconcile with you.

Now we certainly can't commingle people's messiness and disobedience with the promises of God. When God makes a promise and reveals it supernaturally in someone's spirit, He will make it come to pass, for every one of God's promises is "Yes" in him. Therefore, through him we also say "Amen" to the glory of God. (2 Cor. 1:20)

But some of us need to be obedient to God in coming through on the promises hoped for towards one another. Some breaches in relationships between us as Jesus followers are happening because one, or both people, in a conflict, refuse to listen to God in some matter and come through for the other person. Some things don't get fulfilled because of disobedience to God.

No matter whether we're obedient or disobedient, we'll all encounter seasons of waiting. Like Simeon, may we wait faithfully, so that when God comes through on whatever He's going to come through on, despite all of us, we may rest in the peace of God, ready to meet with Him and enjoy Him forever!

This little baby that Simeon was holding was a child of promise that God had *prepared in the presence of all peoples* — a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to the people of Israel. This spoke to the worldwide significance of Jesus' arrival. This line echoed Isa 42:6, which explained the vocation of Yahweh's Suffering Servant.<sup>9</sup>

Yup- Jesus fulfilled all that His people were longing for, and more. He would fulfill the longings of people who weren't even looking for, or longing for Him as well! Isn't He the Savior of the World who could do just that?

He didn't come only for cessationists, pentecostals, mainliners, evangelicals, egalitarians, complementarians, organic Christians or corporate Christians, He came for

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<sup>9</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:29–32). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

all of em! He wants all of em drawn to Himself! He'd sure love it if some mentioned above could get along as a family somehow!

He didn't just come to rescue people born in bible believing homes, He came to rescue and bring salvation to agnostics, atheists, Jews, Muslims, deconstructionists, Hindus, Buddhists, ex-vangelicals, and Zoroastrians. In Christ alone it can be done! Anyone can come to a saving knowledge of Him! He can do it!

We see next Mary & Joseph's reaction to this wild yoda-like dude Simeon blessing their little baby...

*<sup>33</sup> His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and told his mother Mary, "Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed—<sup>35</sup> and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."*

Would you be blown away if someone picked up your baby and said all this crazy stuff? But hey, they had both been supernaturally visited by angels in regards to Jesus's birth. However, it still had to be wildly amazing to see these things come to pass.

Simeon then moved from invitational, encouraging and loving words into challenging, prophetic, convicting words towards Mary and Joseph. Simeon prophesied rightly that Jesus would cause the "fall and rise of many in Israel". In words taken from Isa 8:14, Simeon summarized the divided response people would later have to Jesus' ministry.<sup>10</sup>

There was a special significance connected with the Person of Christ. His very presence on earth proved a tremendous rebuke to sin and unholiness, and thus brought out the bitter animosity of the human heart.<sup>11</sup>

Have you ever had sweet and sour chicken from a Chinese joint?

I don't order it as much now as I used to because it's so intense, but the thing I love about sweet and sour sauce is that it's both sweet and sour at the same time. It's got that mixture of sour and sweet on the tongue.

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<sup>10</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:34). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>11</sup> Believer's Bible Commentary Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1992, 1995, 2016 by William MacDonald.



Jesus is sweet and sour. The words of Simeon pointed both to the invitational, grace filled sweetness and the challenging, convicting, truth-filled sourness of Jesus. But hey man- lemons are just as good for ya as watermelon is!

This little baby Jesus was to become sweet in the best ways man... He would grow up to rescue people from sin, perform miracles, heal people physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. He would walk on water. He would raise the dead. He would calm storms. He would turn water to wine. He would hang with sinners and drunks and they loved Him. He still does so today from the throne room in heaven through the Holy Spirit living in His people!

This little baby Jesus was also to become real sour in the best ways. He called people out on their sin. He lived a perfectly obedient life and put up with zero nonsense from people. He challenged the religious hypocrisy of His time. He got mixed responses. Folks constantly tried to trap Him, confuse Him, and expose Him but couldn't do it. He got betrayed for money by one of his very closest disciples. He died a brutal death by a bludgeoning-style beating within an inch of his life, then carrying a cross, getting nailed into it, and dying by asphyxiation. He rose again and appeared in bodily form, flipping and freaking everyone out. He'll return one day as a powerful, in many ways terrifying and awe-inducing conquering King.

Jesus was sweet and sour, just like the Holy Spirit prophesied through old man Simeon!

And on a devastating sour note, a sword would pierce the soul of Mary also, which was perhaps a reference to the grief that Jesus' premature death will bring her.<sup>12</sup>

After the account of Simeon we get into Luke 2:36–40, where the second prophetic figure who encountered Jesus in the temple was the aged prophetess Anna.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage;*  
<sup>37</sup> *and was a widow for eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers.* <sup>38</sup> *At that very moment, she came up and began to thank God and to speak about him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Lk 2:36–38)*

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<sup>12</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:35). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>13</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 2:36–40). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, was 84 years of age and long widowed. Apparently she was a member of the resident staff at the temple in Jerusalem, devoting herself to continual service in the temple. The text does not indicate why she was called a “prophetess.” Perhaps she spent time praising and bearing testimony or even foretelling future events under divine inspiration. In simplest terms, she obviously was a woman through whom God spoke. As a descendant of the tribe of Asher, Anna looked for the Messiah as the prophets Isaiah (Is. 9:6) and Micah (Mic. 5:2) had foretold.

Anna watched as Simeon prayed, knowing in her heart that the Messiah had come. Luke’s description of this woman helps the reader to understand the respect and veneration that she commanded. A lifetime of prayer and fasting made her comments worth reporting. She, a recognized prophetess, confirmed God’s gift of redemption, and her words resonated with all who looked for salvation (Luke 2:38).

Anna personified in her day those who “serve the living and true God, and . . . wait for His Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). She is a model for us; like her, women are to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12, 13).<sup>14</sup>

True to form, Luke made sure to not only flex the fact that old man Simeon had blessed and prophesied over Jesus, and had then shepherded and prophesied to Mary and Joseph, but then Anna hit the scene. And by the way, Anna encountered the baby Messiah, and, fueled by years of fasting, prayer and intimacy with the almighty, she started to PREACH to everyone around her about Him y’all! Luke loved to highlight how the cultural outcasts of the time were constantly in Jesus’s orbit- totally getting who He was way before the elites ever would.

Again, in this time, much like in many cultures still today, women were not regarded as being as worthy as men. But here we have wise old Anna evangelizing and prophesying to everyone about this Messiah before barely anyone had any idea who in the world He was! Praise the Lord!

And may we imitate the zeal and devotion of Anna! May Christ live in us and inspire us to speak boldly and passionately for Him and about Him to people who need Him!

Why did Anna speak boldly and passionately? Jesus had fulfilled the longing in her heart! She knew this by the Holy Spirit! She didn’t need Jesus to bring her husband

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<sup>14</sup> NKJV Woman's Study Bible Copyright © 1995, 2016 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

back from the dead to know it. She didn't need to have years of her life left to know it. She knew it DEEP in her spirit! We can know Jesus like this too. Let's be like Anna.