

## Revealing Hearts

*“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'” Luke 2:34-35.*

Much of the ministry of Jesus didn't fit into the image of the Jews for the role of the Messiah. The prominent role of the Messiah was to be king, and, strangely, Jesus refused kingship at least twice – once when Jesus was tempted by the devil and once when the people tried to make Jesus king by force. Jews may naturally have assumed that the Messiah would obey the laws of God, and yet, to them, Jesus broke the Sabbath often and He mingled with unclean people. The Messiah was to establish the kingdom of God and even to Christians Jesus only did that in part with the final establishment of the kingdom yet to come. So how are any of us to understand the role of the Messiah and the ministry of Jesus?

This passage in Luke gives us insight into reconciling the prophecies of the Messiah with the ministry of Jesus. One of the main aspects of the ministry of Jesus was to reveal hearts. This is a necessary prerequisite for establishing all that Jesus did and will establish. If Jesus didn't reveal our hearts to ourselves, none of us – Jews or Gentiles – would have been prepared (or even willing) to enter into the kingdom of God. We first need our hearts revealed in order to acknowledge our desire for the reality of sin in order to acknowledge our need and want for the Messiah and the Messiah's kingdom in the first place. It's no surprise that the Messiah came without fully establishing the kingdom when we understand that none of us would have been ready or willing to enter without His earthly ministry. His earthly ministry, then, was a necessary purification process for Jews and Gentiles to be able to enter into the kingdom.

In Simeon's words the Jews would have heard familiar and understandable statements. The fall and rising of many in Israel: No problem with that. A sign that is opposed: Of course some will be opposed to the new king of Israel. But the reason for the previous two being the revealing of hearts? Who would have seen that one coming? And yet, with hindsight, we see the patience and grace of God and His desire for everyone to be purified and to enter into the kingdom. **[DJR]**