

Worship Material
After Christmas, what next?
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 31st December

Begin with an opening prayer

Abba Father, God of all power and wisdom,
your glory shines in all creation.
You knew and loved us long before we came to be,
and your love surrounds us now.

We bow before you in joyous exultation.

Jesus, Son of the Most High and King of kings,
you were born into a lowly cradle;
love's heart personified from cradle to cross
and beyond to your kingdom throne.

We bow before you in joyous exultation.

Holy Spirit, moving upon the earth
communicating and revealing God's wisdom, love and power,
you open hearts to receive and transform lives.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we bow before you in joyous exultation. Amen.

Read Luke 2:22-40

Bible notes

First, who are Simeon and Anna? After all, they don't appear anywhere else in the Bible. The simple answer is that they are witnesses who recognise and acknowledge the child Jesus. Simeon speaks of salvation for all people, not just Israel (vv.30-31), and speaking to Mary, his words echo the story of Hannah and Samuel, albeit with a more ominous tone (v.35). Anna does not make any pronouncements like those of Simeon; rather, in her role as a witness, she tells what she has seen and heard and spreads the word.

Second, Simeon recognises that the infant Jesus is the fulfilment of the promise made by God to God's people. Promises are big throughout the Bible, beginning with the story of Noah and continuing with Abraham and Moses. They tell us that the relationship between God and creation is founded upon the truth that God's word can be relied upon.

Third, the faithfulness of Joseph and Mary underlies, indeed is critical to, the Christmas story. They are faithful to God's promise which is reflected in their keeping of the Law (vv.22a,23a,24a,39a).

In this passage, the certainty of the past is the sure foundation for going forward into a new age in the overarching story of God and creation.

Prayer

Jesus, you came and you conquered. You were born into the world, recognised by some but denied by many. You grew in wisdom, at one with the Father, your life impacting the world then and now. Journeying to the cross you left footprints for generations to follow – footprints of love, healing and joy. Thank you that as we journey into a new year with hearts open to you, we carry with us your joy and light. As we walk forward together may we be able to say, 'I see and hear your wisdom.' We walk with you, Lord, thanking and praising your holiness. **Amen.**

A prayer to conclude

Lord, the excitement of Christmas Day is over,
but Christmas is never over because you are with us – always.
Help us to live this coming week,
indeed, the coming year,
with the same excitement as we had last week. **Amen.**