

They were first given God's word,
telling them what they were going to see.
How did the Magi know when they saw the star
that it meant a new king was born in Israel?
I suspect that their libraries contained books of the Bible
that an ancient Magi named Daniel often read,
containing prophesy that "a star shall rise out of Jacob
and a scepter out of Israel."

Simeon had been given a promise by God
that he would not die before he saw the Lord's Christ.
It was believing that word of promise that brought him here
and caused him to recognized Jesus for who he was
and recognize what it meant for him,
that now he could depart in peace,
just as God had said to him in his word.

I believe the same is true for us today.
Others may look at beauty in nature and see random chance
But God's word points out for us fingerprints of creator
and they are there, all over the place.
Others may look at history and see fate or good luck
But God's word points out his guiding hand
leading to a conclusion he has all planned.
Others may look at our world today and see fearful chaos
of wars and one crisis after another
But God's word promises us his protection
so we can look at the same things and be at peace.

Old Simeon is looking at death itself coming soon
but instead of seeing uncertainty, dark gloom or fear
he sees peace, prepared for him by God
and promised in his word.

Lutherans sing these words of Simeon
after we have received Holy Communion.
Others see in the Lord's supper only bread and wine
but we recognize Jesus, his actual body and blood,
all because we have his word that it is there
and we believe his promise
and so we, too, leave with newfound peace,
because, when we have and believe God's word, like Simeon...

WE BEGIN TO SEE GOD'S SALVATION

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation

³¹ that you have prepared... for glory to your people Israel."

Hearing the first notes of a song can not only cause you
to recognize what is coming but also to remember the past.
For example, whenever I hear the Beatle's song "Uncle Albert"
I can see myself in the A&W restaurant kitchen
where I worked the summer that song played
on the radio over and over and over.

Simeon says he sees the salvation God prepared
through ages past for glory to his people Israel.

When God's temple was first built,
God showed his presence there by filling it
with a cloud like was seen on Mt. Sinai
This cloud was known as the Shekinah: glory.

It has been a long time since that Shekinah has been seen
but Simeon says I see God & his glory in temple again.

What does Simeon see? He sees a little baby boy
and the sacrifice required of a poor couple
Although they can only afford two doves,
this sacrifice is counted as good enough
to redeem firstborn son who rightfully belongs to the Lord
who saved Israel's firstborn sons from death
in the Passover in Egypt.

But here Simeon also sees Jesus, God's own son,
who's sacrifice is enough to redeem all of us
from slavery to sin and death.

He doesn't get to see him grow up to teach & do miracles.
He doesn't see him die on the cross or rise again.
He sees only this beginning of his keeping all the law for us
and still he sees God's whole salvation,
like one standing at on the shore says I see the ocean
Because what God has started he is sure to finish.

We sing this song when we have seen
God come in person to his temple again
And we see again the salvation he prepared,
Jesus body that died on the cross for us
and continued presence with us because of resurrection.

This causes us to see our resurrection as well.
Since 4th century this song has been sung at evening prayer,
a way of saying, like Simeon I am ready to die in peace,
confident I have God's salvation.

We come to this sacrament this evening,
to experienced Christ's presence and so be ready for death

so that when we come to our death
we are ready to experience Christ's presence.
But we recognize that what we see for ourselves here
is also just a beginning.

WE BEGIN TO SHARE GOD'S LIGHT

in the presence of all peoples,
³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

As soon as we recognize a song, we can start singing.
Then, when others hear it too, they can all join in.

This song of Simeon is meant to be
a sing-along for everyone.

Already Simeon recognizes what Jesus disciples themselves
struggled to see even after the resurrection.

This light that causes us to see our savior
and that gives us peace in our dark lives.

is not just for Israel, not just for us, but for all peoples.

The light Simeon somehow sees
is the same light that may already be seen
by Gentile Magi far away, searching the sky.

This is the theme of Epiphany.

The identity and glory of Jesus is revealed and spreads
because he is the savior of the whole world.

So we depart in peace, not just ready to go to heaven
but ready to go with this peace to others
who still sit in darkness.

who, because of their anxieties don't see God's peace
because of their heartaches don't see God's love
because of their busyness don't see God's working
because of their distractions don't see God's joy
because of their discouragement don't see God's hope.

They need us to share the word we and Simeon have heard,
the word of God's promise of salvation,

to share words that say: "See, there it is,
Come along, I'll show you. It is right here all along.

Like Simeon,

WE BEGIN TO SHARE GOD'S LIGHT with all peoples when

WE BEGIN TO SEE GOD'S SALVATION

which is revealed to us when

WE BEGIN BY LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

which promised us forgiveness, grace and eternal peace.