

Wisdom and favor (Luke 2:22-40)

The hymns of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon reflect the worship material of early Christians.

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An amazing thing about Luke's birth narrative is that it also follows up with what happens the following week. Given that the Holy Family was in Bethlehem, the trip to the Jerusalem temple for the dedication was easy to make.

After telling of shepherds in the fields coming to Jesus, Luke tells the story of old friends in the temple—Simeon and Anna—showing that God's saving-revealing work is received by young and old alike.

Luke describes Simeon as "righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel" and notes that he is guided by the Spirit in his encounter with Jesus and his parents. Echoing Isaiah 9:2, Simeon offers a time-changing prayer, declaring God's new age of redemption: "my eyes have seen your salvation."

Then the 84-year-old widowed prophetess Anna enters the scene. Her spontaneous praise over the Christ child declares hope to those looking for the redemption of Israel.

Not only do Simeon and Anna echo the worship material of ancient Israel, but the hymns of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon in Luke's first two chapters reflect the worship material of early Christians, as well.

The poetic features of these early Christian hymns are featured artistically in volume 6 of the *Saint John's Bible*. [Hazel Dolby's painting Master, Now You Are](#) depicts Simeon's song visually. The piece is displayed by Houston Christian University, along with the other hymns of Luke 1-2 and the rest of the artwork in this amazing volume.

Luke then concludes the scene with a second travel narrative, reporting the Holy Family's return to Nazareth of Galilee. As the child grows in strength, he is also filled with wisdom and God's favor.

As we enter this new year, we can also be open to God's wisdom and favor—and to the coming of Christ in our lives.