



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 2:22-40**

To understand what Mary and Joseph were doing at the Temple.

## 33 Days Later

One of the benefits of understanding the Old Testament references in the New Testament is the ability to put together a more accurate timeline. Verse 22 begins with, “And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses,” which indicates a specific amount of time has passed. In verse 21, it is revealed that Jesus was given His Name 8 days after His birth during the time of His circumcision. The time of purification according to the Law of Moses is given in Leviticus chapter 12:2b-4a: “If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying.” The law lays out a timeline: birth, circumcision 8 days later, and purification 33 days after that. Verse 22, then, picks up 33 days after Jesus’ circumcision. The holy family have completed the required time and are now getting ready to travel to the Temple to give the appropriate offerings as laid out in Leviticus 12 and Exodus 13.

## Fulfilling the Law

Verses 22 through 24 include some significant fulfillment of Old Testament laws. Below is a brief breakdown of each of them.

**UNCLEAN**

Leviticus 12 sets forth the law of purification that is required of women who have just given birth. The law indicates that if the child is male, the woman is unclean for 7 days, and then she is to remain in purification for another 33 days, for a total of 40 days. If the child is female, she is unclean for 14 days, and remains in purification for 66 days, for a total of 80 days. For Mary, given that Jesus is male, the first applies. In order to make purification for her uncleanness, Leviticus 12:6-7 go on to describe what kind of offering is to be given in the Temple: “And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a *lamb a year old for a burnt offering*, and a *pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering*, and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female.”

This is significant for two reasons. For one, it speaks to the false doctrine that Mary was without sin from the moment of conception, as first ratified in a papal bull by Pius IX called *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854. It was, however, argued even prior to this that Mary was without personal sin going all the way back to the Council of Trent (1545-1563). However, given that Luke asserts her need for the law of purification, it would be illogical to arrive at such a conclusion. Mary needed to give both a burnt offering and a sin offering for atonement.

**A HUMBLE SACRIFICE**

The second reason these details are important is the kind of offering she gives. Leviticus calls for “a lamb a year old” and “a pigeon or turtledove,” but Luke states that they brought “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons” (Lk. 2:24). There seems to be a contradiction until you read further in Leviticus 12 and realize that for families who could not afford a lamb, they could offer “two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering” (Lev. 12:8). Luke’s inclusion of this detail gives the reader some information about the holy family, namely that they were not wealthy. They would have been considered lower class and unable to purchase the regular standard for offerings.

**EXODUS 13**

The other reference given here comes from Exodus 13, which requires the firstborn of a womb to be consecrated to the Lord. Exodus 13:1-2 reads, “The LORD said to Moses, “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.” Both Mary and Joseph are following not one, but two laws as prescribed by Moses in their Temple visit.

## Simeon and Anna

When they arrive at the temple, we are introduced to more new characters, Simeon and Anna, and in many ways they both represent the male and female’s hopeful expectation of the coming Messiah in Israel.

**SIMEON**

Simeon is introduced first: “There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him” (Lk. 2:25). Again, we find the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, which is important according to verse 26: “And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” Simeon knew that before he died, he would meet the Messiah, and he becomes immediately convinced “in the Spirit” that Jesus is the One whom he has waited for (Lk. 2:27-32). He immediately takes the baby Jesus and blesses him and speaks. First, he declares he can now die in peace (Lk. 2:29), because he has now seen God’s salvation (Lk. 2:30). He then alludes to Isaiah 49:6, prescribing Jesus as “a light to the Gentiles” and “glory to your people Israel,” a reference to Isaiah 60:1. He goes to say that Jesus will cause a rise and fall in Israel,

which is precisely why He came (Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6-8). That Mary herself will even be pierced could be an allusion to her presence at the crucifixion as Jesus was dying (Jn. 19:25).

### **ANNA**

Verses 36 and 37 introduce Anna: “And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.” She was a prophetess who, like Simeon, walked closely to God through the disciplines of fasting and prayer. Verse 38 indicates that as Simeon was blessing Jesus, Anna came in and recognized Jesus as the Messiah as well.

## **What About Now?**

One major takeaway of this passage comes from analyzing who recognizes Jesus correctly. Luke’s Gospel will account for many people who recognize Jesus incorrectly, but here in the first couple of chapters we have already met a few people who get His identity right. First, John the Baptizer from the womb. Then Elizabeth and Zechariah, and then Simeon and Anna. What do they all have in common? With the exception of Anna, all of the others are explicitly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and it is implied with Anna given her radical commitment to worship, prayer, and fasting in the Temple continually. A good application, then, is the importance of walking with God in the power of His Spirit. It is the Spirit who illumines the heart and mind to rightly recognize Jesus for who He is. This was why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:10, “These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” It’s what he meant in Romans 8:14 when he said, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” You can’t know Jesus without the Spirit. By extension, it means when you are witnessing to someone or praying for someone to become a Christian, pray specifically that the Holy Spirit would fall upon them.

## **Study Questions**

### **Day One**

1. Read Luke 2:22-24. What led the holy family to the Temple? What did they bring with them to sacrifice, and why? What two laws were being fulfilled here (Hint: See above notes)?

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2. Read Luke 2:25-26. Who is introduced here, and how is he described? What did the Holy Spirit reveal to him?

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### **Day Two**

1. Read Luke 2:27-28. What did the Spirit reveal to him when he came into the Temple and saw Jesus? What did he do in response to this?

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2. Read Luke 2:29-30. What did he say first upon seeing Jesus? What did his eyes see?
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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 2:31-32. Who has prepared this moment? What two prophetic references was Simeon making here in verse 32 (Hint: See above notes)?
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2. Read Luke 2:33-35. In your own words, summarize what Simeon said here. What do you think he meant?
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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 2:36-38. Who is Anna? How is she described? What did Anna do when Simeon began to bless Jesus? What did she speak and who did she speak it to?
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2. Read Luke 2:39-40. After they were finished giving their offerings, where did the family move to? Was this where they came from? What happened to the boy?
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## Week 8 Discussion: The Disciplines Matter

In verses 35 through 38 we are introduced to the prophetess known as Anna. She was committed to the Lord and in His Temple continually worshipping by means of fasting and prayer. One implication of Luke's Gospel thus far is the need of the Spirit in order to rightly recognize Jesus, and Anna depends on the Spirit through the spiritual disciplines. Talk as a group about the importance of these disciplines to you, and what you could do to better enact them in your life.

1. Icebreaker: When you think of "worship," do you think of "fasting and prayer?" Why or why not?
2. Is fasting an appealing practice to you? Why or why not?
3. How often do you pray, and what do you typically pray for?
4. How important is worship to you?
5. Do you believe worship, fasting, prayer, or some other discipline is a helpful means to connect with God on a more intimate level? Why or why not?
6. How important is the corporate time of worship to you on Sunday mornings or during Nights of Worship?

## Takeaways:

1. Mary and Joseph came to the Temple to offer sacrifices in fulfillment of two Old Testament laws.
2. Both Simeon and Anna, two Godly people in the Temple, rightly recognized Jesus while they were there and glorified God as a result.