

Presentation!

Luke 2:21-38

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for (DATE)

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Summary: When the nativity scenes go away, and the Christmas season has come to a close, there is so much more about Jesus that we need to remember. He left that manger, grew as a boy and became a man. Luke doesn't draw the curtains with the shepherds but takes us into the early days of Jesus' life. Join Stephen today and explore some of the important figures that Baby Jesus met.

When the final scene wraps up in the typical Christmas play, Mary and Joseph would have said farewell to the shepherds, who now return to their fields and their flocks, praising God for what they have seen and heard.

And with that, the curtains close and Luke chapter 2 is tucked away until the next Christmas season.

Ask the average person what happened next, and you might be greeted with a blank stare and a "Well, I don't know."

You see, for the world at large, Jesus never really leaves that manger scene. In fact, it's safer for the world to keep Him that way — as a cute little baby in a manger.

Is that all there is?

The truth is that the rest of Luke chapter 2 reveals some incredibly significant moments in the childhood of Jesus.

And remember, Luke is writing to a Gentile named Theophilus to give him a rock-solid foundation of certainty regarding the deity of Christ and the authenticity of the gospel of Christ.

Luke is the only Gospel writer to include these moments that verify who Jesus really is, even as a child.

Let's go back and pick it up in **Luke chapter 2**.

What happens next is that three important meetings take place.

And the first important meeting is when Jesus meets Moses, so to speak.

Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate: Luke 1-13* (Victor Books, 1989), p. 26

Jesus Meets Moses

In **verses 21-24**, Jesus is brought under the law, given by God through Moses.

In fact, you could circle the phrase, **the law**, 3 times in these opening verses:

verse 22 — according to the Law of Moses,

verse 23 — as it is written in the Law of the Lord,

verse 24 — according to what is said in the Law.

Jesus came to deliver his people; he was born under the Law, obeyed the commands of the law (**Galatians 4**); He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill the law (**Matthew 5**).

Ibid, p. 27

Jesus certainly broke religious traditions; He broke man-made regulations and rules, but Jesus never broke the law of God through Moses.



What does this truth about Jesus reveal about the law of God? When religious leaders, pastors, or teachers try to add to the law of God, are believers required to obey them?

Which means even before Jesus could knowingly keep the law, Mary and Joseph carefully followed the law regarding Him.

Verse 21 tells us that Joseph and Mary have Jesus circumcised on the eighth day — and that's in accordance with **Genesis 17**.

This inducted Jesus into the covenant family of Abraham and into the national life of Israel. This was Mary and Joseph's statement of faith that they were going to follow God's word relating to the Abrahamic covenant.

And this is really remarkable, isn't it? They're back in Nazareth, where everybody is looking at them sideways.

Why would they ever care about the law? People would think they broke the law — their illegitimate child is exhibit A.

But no matter what people say or think or believe, they are committed to identifying their son with the law of God and the people of God and the word of God and the will of God.

And that isn't the end of it. There are matters related to the law of purification and the law of redemption.

Look at verse 22:

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ... ("Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord.

Luke 2:22-24a

Now two events, or ceremonies, are taking place here.

The first is a ceremony of redemption. Notice the text again — **“Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”**.

God had a claim to the firstborn Jewish male; they were considered **holy** — a word that means, separate, or separated unto God.

If the firstborn son was from the tribe of Levi, he could essentially be drafted later for the priesthood.

If he wasn't from the tribe of Levi — and Jesus wasn't, He was from the royal tribe of Judah — then the parents were simply acknowledging God's right over their newborn son's life, and they would acknowledge God's ownership by paying the priest a fee — a redemption tax of five shekels (**Numbers 18 tells us**), and essentially buy the child back.

So every parent was acknowledging their child belonged to God because God alone had the power to give life to begin with.

Bruce B. Barton, [Life Application Bible: Luke](#) (Tyndale, 1997), p. 49

Imagine the irony here:

- they are redeeming the Redeemer;
- they are purchasing the One who had come to purchase us with His death and resurrection.

Now the second event that takes place is the ceremony of purification.

According to the law, Mary was ceremonially and legally unclean for 40 days, following the birth of Jesus.

Having delivered a child and the issuing of blood, she was to spend 40 days in her home; she wasn't required to attend to any religious requirements outside the home.

For 40 days she stayed indoors with her baby and was essentially cared for and waited on by family and friends.

This gave her time to rest as well as figure out a thousand things related to her first-born child — which is a wonderful insight into the wisdom of God for a new mother — giving her time to heal and adapt and bond with her newborn.

I asked my mother recently how long she stayed in the hospital after I was born and she said, 8 days.

She probably needed the extra time to get ready to raise me. Eight days in the hospital, and the total hospital bill was \$145.00. I know that really dates me — it's hard to believe after hearing that figure that I'm barely out of my 40's!

Over the decades that length of stay has declined hasn't it?

Today, the amount of time a young mother is given between the birth of her baby and being wheeled out of the hospital is barely enough time to get acquainted.

When Marsha delivered our twins, she was in the hospital for four days.

In fact, this will tell you how much times have changed in 35 years; there was such a desire to strengthen the husband and wife's relationship and just sort of set the stage for them — the night before Marsha was discharged, the hospital, as they did for all the parents, sent the two of us to a private dining area where we were served a candlelight steak dinner cooked to order.

It wasn't Wake Med in case you're jotting that down. We lived in Texas — steak was cheaper!

But can you imagine — a quiet, candlelight dinner before going back home. It would be our last quiet dinner for 18 years!

You see, built into the Law of Moses was an easy-to-miss element of God's concern for the mother, and the marriage, and the child, and the home.

Now there's something else going on here — **notice again at verse 24:**

And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Luke 2:24

This is the ceremony of purification.

According to the details given in **Leviticus chapter 12**, Mary was to bring to the priest two sacrifices; a lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering.

These animals would have been purchased from the priests — and if she were too poor to purchase a lamb, she could purchase another bird to take its place.

William Barclay, The Gospel of Luke (Westminster Press, 1975), p. 24

You have here the reference that Mary fulfilled the law by offering a pair of birds.

And again, this scene is marked with wonderful irony.

As Mary and Joseph watched by the gate closest to the Sanctuary, just beyond the court of women, did they realize — did she realize — that although she was too poor to buy a sacrificial lamb, she was holding in her arms the sacrificial Lamb of God, the final sacrifice for sin.

Now with that accomplished, having introduced Jesus, as it were, to Moses, Mary and Joseph would have slipped out of the Temple and back to their little village of Nazareth unnoticed.

But God the Father had other plans, and a couple more meetings to take place in the Temple; **look at verse 25:**

Jesus Meets Simeon

Now 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.

Luke 2:25

Some Old Testament scholars believe that Simeon was the son of the famous rabbi Hillel and the father of the Apostle Paul's tutor Gamaliel. This was the same Simeon who became the leader of the Sanhedrin in A.D. 13 — a highly respected religious leader.

John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Luke* (Kregel, 2005) p. 78

What's especially interesting is that Jewish writings during this time, which tell of the great rabbis and spiritual leaders in the Sanhedrin, omit any praise for Simeon — possibly because Simeon will become a follower of Jesus Christ.

Adapted from Phillips, p. 78

The name Simeon means harkening or listening, and evidently, he was listening to the Spirit of God — notice **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.

Luke 1:26

Verse 27:

And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God...

Luke 1:27-28

Get this scene — here's a man who's been given revelation from God that he will not die before he meets the Messiah!

How long has he waited? We're not told. How old is he? We're not told.

And all the while, Simeon's getting older, and older, but hanging onto that promise from God that he cannot die before meeting the Messiah.

Can I tell you something: you don't want to either!

You don't want to die until you have professed personal faith and trust and hope in Jesus as your Messiah.



Have you professed your faith in Jesus as your Messiah? If so, what kind of confidence does that give you? If not, what is holding you back?

Sixty seconds after you die, that will be the only thing that matters: that somewhere in your past you had set yourself aside, your works aside, your religious upbringing aside, your good deeds aside, and trusted alone in the Lamb — the Messiah — for your salvation.

Every day Simeon's wondered:

- Will this be the day I meet Him?
- Is that little child running across the courtyard the One?

- Is that young man entering the temple grounds — could he be the One?

Finally, Simeon received his direction by the Spirit of God that this poor couple standing over there holding a six-week-old baby boy — He's the one! He's the Messiah!

And he goes over — **verse 28:**

*He took him up in his arms
and blessed God and said,*

...

Luke 2:28

I love this! There's no reference to him asking Mary or Joseph, "Can I hold your baby?" He just goes over and takes him up in his arms — and I imagine with tears streaming down his face he begins to chant.

These are poetic lines with the rhythm and meter of a song of praise.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights from Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 73

His song has two stanzas — one is personal and the other is prophetic — **verse 29:**

*Lord, now you are letting
your servant depart in
peace, according to your
word;*

Luke 2:29

In other words, you promised me I would not die until I met the Messiah, so now you can take me anytime.

We know from history that he will live a longer life, but he has nothing holding him back; he's not afraid to die, because he's met the Messiah.

My 90-year-old father — almost 91 years old — told me that last week, "I'm not afraid to die." He went on, "I'd rather not leave before your mother passes away so I can take care of her, but besides that, I'm ready to go . . . and I'm not afraid."

How about you? The only people not afraid to die are those who know the Messiah as their personal Savior and Redeemer and Lord.

I'm not trying to scare you — but there is a world out there beyond this one and those who know the Savior have been given this incredible promise, as Jesus said, "***I am the resurrection and the life — he that believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live again.***" (John 11:25).

Simeon says, "I have met the Messiah. I have seen the Savior."

Now the prophetic stanza — **verse 30:**

*"For my eyes have seen
your salvation that you have
prepared in the presence of
all peoples, a light for
revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people
Israel."*

Luke 2:30-32

In other words, Jesus is a Messiah offering salvation to the whole world.

Simeon now speaks to Mary and Joseph, offering vital prophetic information they will ponder over the years. Then he speaks directly to Mary, **verse 34**:

“Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ... so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

Luke 2:34-35b

In other words, this baby will grow up and cause a lot of trouble. People are going to either hate him or love him; Israel will either support Him or stumble over Him; His life will represent an intersection and an ultimatum for every person He meets — and many will want to get rid of Him.

And to Mary, notice the parenthesis in **verse 35**:

“(And a sword will pierce through your own soul also).”

Luke 2:35a

This implies that Joseph will have passed away prior to the adult years and ministry of Jesus, if not earlier, or Joseph would have been included.

Wiersbe, p. 30

Simeon is effectively preparing Mary for a difficult life. “Look, your baby is the Messiah, but let me tell you what that will mean — a life of sorrow and pain.”



If you knew that becoming a Christian would guarantee a life of pain and suffering for you, would you still do it? What does Jesus say about if we will experience persecution and suffering?

Mary did experience more and more sorrow until the day she stood there at His cross with other women and the Apostle John.

Hers would be the unique suffering of the mother of the Messiah.

Jesus Meets Anna

One more meeting during this incredibly surprising temple visit for Joseph and Mary — we’re told in verse 36 that an elderly woman, a prophetess who had been married for seven years but then her husband had unexpectedly died.

She had remained a widow for at least 60 years after his death.

Verse 37 informs us that she is now 84 years old. She had spent her life in one of the temple apartments, no doubt appreciated for the service and care she could provide to the faithful women who came to the temple.

Notice verse 38:

And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak

of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke 2:38

She becomes another early evangelist — she’s telling everybody that the Messiah has arrived.

I wish there was another verse or two that said, “And a great crowd gathered, and they began to worship and praise the Lord for the Messiah who was born!”

There’s not verse like that. There’s no crowd.

We have no biblical record that priests and religious leaders rushed across the Temple plaza to gather around Simeon, Anna, Mary and Joseph to see for themselves, to ask questions, to hear their testimony of the angels and the shepherds and the prophecies.

We have no record of any gathering. People were busy; they had stuff to do; they took no notice of the One who represented every aspect of everything there.

- He was the bread on the showbread table;

- He was the light of candelabra;
- He was the incense wafting its way to the Father;
- He was laver and the water of cleansing;
- He was the turtledove and the Lamb dying for sin
- He was the High priest interceding for sinners
- He was the veil that will be torn open and allow all who believe in Him to enter into the presence of everlasting God.

No one but a few were listening. No one but a few cared.

What about you?



What about you? Jesus is calling you; are you listening?

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