

Luke 2:22-40 New International Version

²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Jesus Presented in the Temple

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

³³ The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

QUESTIONS**1. What is the significance of the circumcision and naming rituals that Luke mentions?**

“Circumcision of the male child marked his acceptance into the covenant community (Genesis 17:9-14). Both rites, circumcision and naming gave the child an identity. As was often the case, the granting of a biblical or religious name was an act of blessing, a dedication of the child to God, and a declaration of the child’s heritage and character. The Law specified that circumcision was to take place on the eighth day (Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3; Luke 1:59; Phil 13:5)”
The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary: Volume 9, p.69

2. What are the purification rites mentioned in verse 22?

The purification of the mother was prescribed by the Law. After the birth of a male child, the mother was ceremonially unclean for seven days and underwent purification for 33 days (the purification period was twice that for a female child; Lev 12:1-5). During this time, she was not permitted to enter the Temple or touch any holy object. After her time of purification, she was required to offer a lamb or pigeon or turtledove. If she could not afford a lamb, she could offer instead two turtledoves or pigeons (Lev 12:6-8).

The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: Volume 9, p.69

3. Why are Mary and Joseph taking the baby Jesus to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord?

As a reminder of the Exodus, the firstborn child was consecrated to the Lord (Exodus 13:2, 11-16) The firstborn male was to be redeemed (i.e., bought back) at a price of five shekels of silver (Num 18:15-16). Eventually, the Levites were designated to offer service to God and atonement for the people in place of the firstborn (Num 8:14-19.) Luke omits the redemption of the baby Jesus which may have been due to not being aware of this rite, but many commentators conclude that this omission was intentional to imply that Jesus was not bought back from the Lord but continued to be dedicated to the Lord's service.

The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: Volume 9, p.69

4. Why do Mary and Joseph offer a pair of doves or two young pigeons for sacrifice?

See answer to #2 above. The sacrifice of two turtledoves or pigeons implies the relative poverty of Joseph and Mary, and for most common people of that day.

5. Who is Simeon? What do we know about him?

Luke tells us that Simeon was a righteous and devout man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.

6. What does Luke mean when he says that Simeon is “waiting for the consolation of Israel?” What does that mean?

The “consolation of Israel” refers to the restoration of the people and the fulfillment of God's redemptive work. The term comes from Isaiah 40:1,2 “Comfort, O Comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem”; Isaiah 51:3 “For the Lord will comfort Zion”; and Isaiah 52:9 “Break forth together in singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.”

The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: Volume 9, p.70

7. What does Luke mean when he says of Simeon that “the Holy Spirit was on him”?

Like Elizabeth, Zechariah, and Mary upon whom the Holy Spirit fell causing them to utter prophetically, Simeon’s words were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

8. What had the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon?

The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Messiah

9. How is it that Simeon happened to be at the Temple when Mary and Joseph arrived?

The Holy Spirit prompted him to be there so that he could see the baby Jesus, and evidently pointed him out to Simeon.

10. What did Simeon’s prayer of praise reveal about the baby Jesus to Joseph and Mary?

Essentially, Simeon declares that the baby is the Messiah who would bring salvation to the world. He notes that this salvation will be made available to all nations, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of the people of Israel.

11. What warning does Simeon share with Mary concerning Jesus?

“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

12. Who is Anna? What does Luke share about her?

Anna is a widow, whose husband died after only 7 years of marriage. She is from the tribe of Asher, one of the Northern Tribes of Israel. She was 84 years old. She devoted herself to prayer, fasting at the Temple, both day and night, never leaving the Temple.

13. What does Anna share about the baby Jesus?

We don’t have record of her prophecy, but it is assumed that she echoes Simeon. She is said to have “spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”

14. What do Joseph and Mary do after they present Jesus in the Temple?

They return to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

15. What does Luke tell us about the childhood of Jesus?

“the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.”