

“Mary and Joseph Dedicate Jesus at the Temple”

Luke 2:21-24

Our last time together in **Luke 2**, was three weeks ago when we studied **verses 15-20**, about how some shepherds near Bethlehem were watching over their flock, when they received an announcement from God’s angels, telling them that God’s peace had come to earth in the form of God’s Son.

The shepherds hurried off to find the baby Jesus, along with Mary and Joseph, just as they had been told. After worshipping God’s Son, the shepherds went back to their flock, but on the way they proclaimed the good news to all who would listen, that indeed the Savior had been born, He is Christ the Lord.

Read **Luke 2:21...** It has been eight days since the birth of Jesus, and according to the law of Moses, it is time for Him to be circumcised (**Genesis 17:9-14**), for it was through the covenant of Circumcision that God set Israel apart from all the other nations on the earth.

It is not a coincidence that vitamin K (blood coagulant) is at its highest level in a male baby on the 8th day of life. The practice of naming a son on the day of his circumcision had become common place, because Abram [*exalted father*] received his new name Abraham [*father of a multitude*] on the day he was circumcised (cf. **Genesis 17:5, 23**), when God made a covenant with him, and all of Israel.

Jesus’s name had been previously given to Mary (**Luke 1:31**), and also to Joseph (**Matthew 1:20-21**). Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Yeshua, which translates into English as Joshua, meaning “God Saves,” or the “God’s Salvation,” (**John 3:16**), “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” **Romans 5:8**, *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Read **Luke 2:22-24...** It is really Mary who must be purified according to the Law, but this period of time affects both Jesus and Joseph, also. **Leviticus 12:1-4**, *The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: ‘When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed,’”* (**Leviticus 15:19**) *“When a woman has a discharge, if her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.”*

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So, according to Jewish law, a woman is considered unclean during the time of her menstrual cycle, but also from the day of the birth of her baby, for seven days; if her baby was a male, then on the eighth day he was to be circumcised, after which the mother would be ceremonial unclean for another thirty-three days.

After the 40 days of purification was completed (cf. **Luke 2:22**), Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. This was done (**Luke 2:23**) because “it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every *firstborn* male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.’” **Exodus 13:1-2**, “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Sanctify to Me every *firstborn*, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me.’” **11-12**, “Now when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, you shall devote to the Lord the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the Lord.” **14-15**, “And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ then you shall say to him, ‘With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed every *firstborn* in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every *firstborn* of my sons I redeem.’”

In **Numbers 3:12-13**, we find reference to God claiming all the firstborn males from the Tribe of Levi, to be set apart for priestly service, “Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every *firstborn*, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be Mine. For all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be Mine; I am the Lord.”

In order for the rest of the firstborn males from the other tribes of Israel to be exempted from priestly duty, a redemption amount had to be paid by the parents (**Numbers 18:15-16**), “Every first issue of the womb of all flesh, whether man or animal, which they offer to the Lord, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. As to their redemption price, from a month old you shall redeem them, by your valuation, five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.” Note: A gerah was the smallest measure of weight in biblical times. There were 20 gerahs per shekel, so 5 shekels equaled 100 gerahs, which was about 2 oz. of silver.

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Israel was a theocracy, a nation ruled by priests not by a king. Money was needed to run the government, and to carry out all the rituals and sacrifices at the temple, and so taxes were levied for all adult male Israelites to pay, of which the five shekels (no small amount) required under Jewish law, was paid by parents of all firstborn males, as a redemption price to the Lord.

Back to **Luke 2:24**... God says all firstborn males of people and animals, belong to Him. Therefore Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the temple to dedicate Him to God; having already paid the five shekels to the priest (**verse 24**), they had come to the temple *“to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”*

Earlier today I told you that under Jewish Law, a woman was considered unclean from the day of the birth of her baby, for seven days; and then, if her baby was a male, on the eighth day he was to be circumcised, after which the mother would be ceremonial unclean for another thirty-three days, for a total of 40 days of ceremonial purification (*cf. **Leviticus 12:1-4***).

Mary’s 40 days of purification are now over and she has come to offer the appropriate sacrifice, so as to be pronounced “clean” by the priest (**Leviticus 12:6-8**), *“When the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting a one year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. Then he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, whether a male or a female. But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.”*

The normal purification sacrifice was *“a one year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering.”* But if a person couldn’t afford a lamb, then pigeons or turtledoves could be used instead, one for the burnt offering and one for the sin offering. Evidently, Mary and Joseph couldn’t afford a lamb, so they offered pigeons or turtledoves instead.

I believe the main priority of Luke’s narrative here (**verses 22-24**), is to show how dedicated and obedient both, Mary and Joseph, were to God. We know, from the biblical record, that Joseph and Mary were personally selected by God, to care for His Son. God’s angel came independently to Mary, and to Joseph, with very specific words and instructions: Mary was to conceive and give birth to God’s Son; Joseph was to take Mary as his wife, and to raise God’s Son, as his very own son.

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Matthew 1:18-25, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And **Joseph** her husband, **being a righteous man** and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to **take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus**, for He will save His people from their sins.’ Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’ And **Joseph** awoke from his sleep and **did as the angel of the Lord commanded him**, and took **Mary** as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she **gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.**”

Luke 1:30-31, “The angel said to **[Mary]**, ‘Do not be afraid; for **you have found favor with God** [with you, God is well-pleased] And behold, **you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.**” **34-35**, “Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered and said to her, “**The Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and **the power of the Most High will overshadow you**; and for that reason **the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.**” **38**, “And **Mary said**, ‘Behold, the bondservant [is used to distinguish a purchased slave who is owned by (bound to) his master from a servant who is simply hired help but is free to go elsewhere] of the Lord; **may it be done to me according to your word.**’ And the angel departed from her.”

Joseph and Mary’s devotion to God, along with their demonstrated faith and belief, is the essence of this passage, which must also include along all that happened before they came to the temple: Two Jewish young people, committed to God and to each other, had received a message from God telling them what was going to happen and why.

In obedience to God, and to the laws of the land, they travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem (a 4 day journey) to be registered in a census; even though Mary is nine months pregnant and close to the time of giving birth. In Bethlehem they find no suitable lodging and are forced to shelter at a place where animals are feed.

The time comes for Jesus to be born, after which some shepherds show up with a fantastic story of how they were watching over their sheep when an angel of God proclaimed to them that the Savior, who is Christ the Lord, had been born in Bethlehem, and they were to go find and worship Him.

January 8, 2023 – (full notes)

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The shepherds locate Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus, telling them about the angels, then as they return to their sheep, they are telling everyone they see what has happened, that the Savior, who is Christ the Lord has been born, and God’s peace has now come to all those who will believe in Him.

Eight days after Christ’s birth, Mary and Joseph have Him circumcised and give Him the name Jesus, just as they had been told. In accordance with the Law of the Lord, they pay the five-shekel redemption amount, and after Mary’s time of purification is fulfilled, the appropriate sacrifice is made, so that (**Leviticus 12:8**), “*the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.*”

What a testimony of obedient submission and devotion we see expressed in the lives of Mary and Joseph. How about you? Are you living in a manner that is pleasing to God? Have you admitted that you are a sinner, believing in and following Jesus Christ: crucified, resurrected, and coming again?

Romans 3:23 tells us all have sinned and are unacceptable to God; **Romans 6:23** tells us all sinners deserve death, but God offers forgiveness and eternal life through His Son Who (**Romans 5:8**) died in our place on the cross; therefore (**Romans 8:1**), there is no condemnation for those who believe in Christ.

The good news is that God turns no one away (**Romans 10:13**), “*Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.*”

Have you done that? Have you admitted you are a sinner and asked God to forgive you, believing in Jesus Christ for salvation?

1John 5:11-13, “*And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*”

Pastor Mike
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