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~ **The Holy Family in Bethlehem and Jerusalem** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 2:21-38.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

**1. Read the text of the story.**

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Luke 2:21-38 NASB	Luke 2:21-38 NLT
<p><sup>21</sup> And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was <i>then</i> called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.</p>	<p><sup>21</sup> Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.</p>
<p><sup>22</sup> And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “EVERY <i>firstborn</i> MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD”), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, “A PAIR OF TURTLEDOWES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS.”</p>	<p><sup>22</sup> Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> The law of the Lord says, “If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD.” <sup>24</sup> So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—“either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”</p>
<p><sup>25</sup> And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, <sup>28</sup> then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,</p>	<p><sup>25</sup> At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him <sup>26</sup> and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup> That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, <sup>28</sup> Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,</p>
<p><sup>29</sup> “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,          According to Your word;  <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen Your salvation,  <sup>31</sup> Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  <sup>32</sup> A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,          And the glory of Your people Israel.”</p>	<p><sup>29</sup> “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,          as you have promised.  <sup>30</sup> I have seen your salvation,  <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared for all people.  <sup>32</sup> He is a light to reveal God to the nations,          and he is the glory of your people Israel!”</p>
<p><sup>33</sup> And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. <sup>34</sup> And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this <i>Child</i> is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed— <sup>35</sup> and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to</p>	<p><sup>33</sup> Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but he will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. <sup>35</sup> As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”</p>
	<p><sup>36</sup> Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the</p>

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<p>the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”</p> <p><sup>36</sup>And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with <i>her</i> husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup> and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. <sup>38</sup> At that very moment she came up and <i>began</i> giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.</p>	<p>daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. <sup>37</sup> Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. <sup>38</sup> She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.</p>
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## 2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- Circumcising young baby boys on the eighth day was based on the original story of Abraham’s circumcision in Genesis 17:12 and from the Mosaic command in Leviticus 12:3. Circumcision brought one into the covenant with Abraham and under the Mosaic Law.
- The offering of sacrifices in the Temple was for the purification of the woman and the redemption of the first born son. This is based on Exodus 13:2-12; Lev 5:11; 12:6-8 and Numbers 3:13 and 8:17.
- The preferred sacrifice was a lamb but Joseph and Mary were too poor for such an offering. Instead, they offered two doves.

*These insights were gleaned from Social Science Commentary of the Synoptic Gospel – Bruce J. Malina.*

### Answer these reflective questions.

**Joseph and Mary could not afford the best sacrifice. This means they were poor and Jesus may have grown up in a home with a family that only had the basics of life. Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 and reflect on the likelihood that Jesus grew up poor.**

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**Simeon said that the Child was appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel and for a sign to be opposed. What do you think this would mean for the nation of Israel? What does it mean for us?**

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**Simeon said that a sword would pierce the heart of Mary. A sword piercing a heart means that great emotion will come upon someone, usually pain and sorrow. What do you think Simeon was referring to when he said this to Mary? How do you think Mary would respond?**

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**Simeon said that the Child would be the glory of Israel and would be a light of revelation to the Gentiles. How has Jesus revealed the things of God to you?**

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