

**Jesus Presented in the Temple**  
**Luke 2:21-38**

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 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, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” 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. 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. 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 and said, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 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.” And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” 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, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. 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. (English Standard Version – ESV)

**Background:**

- Joseph and Mary fulfill the Law of Moses as prescribed (see Exodus 13:2, 12; Leviticus 12:8). The sacrifice they offer indicates they are poor (Leviticus 12:8). According to Jewish custom, Mary laid her hands on the pigeons; then, a priest took them to the southwest corner of the altar to wring one bird’s neck as a sin offering, and burn the other as a whole burnt offering to God.

- The encounter with Simeon would have occurred in the Court of Women. Future intervention for Israel by God was described as “consolation” (Isaiah 49:13, 51:3; 52:9, 66:13). The Holy Spirit was associated with prophecy. On living to see God’s grace before dying (Psalm 91:16), sometimes in the Old Testament the righteous would be spared seeing disaster and the wicked would not experience good (2 Kings 6:2, 22:20). Simeon’s praise reflects Old Testament piety (Genesis 46:30) and prophecy (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6).

- Prophecies in Jewish and Greco-Roman tradition were often obscure, easier to understand in hindsight than at the moment. Simeon’s words probably allude to the stumbling stone of Isaiah 8:14-15 and the anticipated resurrection.

- The Old Testament included prophetesses, but they were much less prominent than their Jewish male counterparts of this period. “Anna” is the Hebrew name “Hannah” (1 Samuel 1:2).

## Questions:

- + What was the significance of the ritual performed in conjunction with the birth of Jesus?  
What rituals (if any) were performed in conjunction with your birth (e.g. dedication, baptism)?  
Of all the religious rituals you know of, which one (if any) is most important to you, and why?
- + Regarding Simeon, the text says, “the Holy Spirit was upon Him” and “he came in the Spirit.”  
How can people know if the Holy Spirit is upon them, and if they are led by the Spirit of God?  
Has the Holy Spirit ever come upon you? If so, what happened and how were you affected?  
How can you be more open and willing to the filling and leading of the Holy Spirit?
- + What does Simeon mean when he says that Jesus is “a light for revelation to the Gentiles?”  
If that was a mission of Jesus during his life on earth, what is your mission on earth?  
How can you know God’s mission for you, and what will it take for you to do it?
- + The text says that Anna was “worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day.”  
What prompts people to worship God with that degree of dedication and devotion?  
How do you worship God? How can you do so with greater dedication and devotion?