

# Luke

Carefully Investigating the Gospel . . . Together

SSBC Luke Bible Study #03

Passage: Luke 2:21-40

Sermon Date: Oct 2, 2005

## Introduction:

Prior to this passage, Luke has described in detail the events surrounding Jesus' birth (this is the only gospel that does so). Now Luke shares how God choreographs an amazing display of his sovereignty, faithfulness, and perfection as the paths of a number of people intersect:

- (1) Joseph and Mary – as they obey the instructions of Jewish Law regarding their firstborn son, Jesus
- (2) Simeon – an ever faithful man waiting for God to fulfill a special promise He'd made to Simeon, and
- (3) Anna – a devout woman who God stationed in the temple for many years.

Luke blesses us by carefully recording the details of these encounters to help us “know the certainty of the things we've been taught” (Luke 1:4 – Luke's stated purpose for writing this historical account).

## Skill Building:

In studying the Bible, it is tempting to turn too quickly to others for help. If we are using a “study bible,” our eyes race to the footnotes for someone else's interpretation. Even our bible study guides tend to lead us too much by drowning us with leading questions aimed toward the author's clever insights. This ends up interfering with our

*This bible study was developed by South Shore Baptist Church in conjunction with our weekly sermon series. To hear a sermon on the same scripture passage covered in this bible study, come to one of our Sunday worship services (8:30am or 11:00am) on the date listed on page 1. Or after that date you can hear it by logging on to [www.southshorebaptist.com/sermons/](http://www.southshorebaptist.com/sermons/)*

*South Shore Baptist Church  
578 Main Street, Hingham, MA 02043  
(781) 749-2592*

own opportunity to have a more direct, Spirit-led interaction with our Lord. Instead, when you read and study the bible, try this sequence:

- i. **Pray** for the Holy Spirit's guidance, and then give yourself enough focused time to listen for it.
- ii. **Study** the passage independently, using an inductive approach to draw out its meaning and apply that to your life.
- iii. **Cross-Reference** to understand one passage better by using other related passages.
- iv. **Collaborate** with others, such as authors who have written commentaries, others in your bible study, your pastor, etc.

Key Principle of Interpretation:  
**Scripture Interprets Scripture**

God doesn't contradict himself. His Word is always true. "No part of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture." (J.I. Packer, *Knowing Scripture*, p. 46)

Studying using this sequence is a discipline that takes training and practice. Like a child faced with a healthy meal who wishes he could instead skip to the dessert, we want to defer to the experts before we've benefited from the healthy meal God has prepared for us. So to help strengthen your study discipline, we'll now begin this week's study by reviewing and practicing cross-referencing (step iii above).

Two basic ways to cross reference are (1) following a topic, and (2) following a storyline. We'll explore these one at a time.

**Following a Topic:**  
 Interpret by comparing and contrasting with other passages that address the same theme or topic. Question 1 gives you a chance to practice this method.

1. Say you noticed how obedient each of the people in this passage were, and wanted to explore this topic more by checking out other passages about obedience and examples of people who were or weren't obedient. You wonder, "Where else does the bible address this same topic?" **How** would you begin look for such related passages?

**TIPS/SUGGESTIONS:**

- ⇒ Look up the word obey or obedience in a concordance, study bible index, or other bible resource you may have access to.
- ⇒ Go to the website [www.biblegateway.org](http://www.biblegateway.org), click on "topical index", and do a search of the word obedience and explore some related passages.

- b. Try finding three cross references related to obedience. Note something you learn from each one.

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**Following a Storyline:**  
 A second method of cross-referencing is following the greater stories and other threads that are woven throughout the bible, such as prophecies that are fulfilled, laws that were (or weren't) obeyed, promises God made and kept, scriptures that are quoted, etc. Questions 2 & 3 involve this type of cross-referencing.

**Joseph and Mary Obey the Law**

2. On page 4 of this study, note the NIV cross references shown in footnotes a & b (referring to verses 2:23-24). Look up these passages. What do you learn or appreciate more about Joseph and Mary when you observe the specific laws their actions are consistent with?

**Prophecies about the Messiah**

3. Another interpretation path is to follow prophecies that echo throughout the bible. Practice that skill using Simeon's prophecy:
  - a. Read Luke 2:34-35 and write down what you observe Simeon predicting based only on what he says in these two verses.

b. Now look at some related prophecies & verses. How do these verses help you better understand Simeon's prophecy (Luke 2:34-35)?

Luke 1:31-33

Luke 1:79.

Isaiah 8:14-15

Heb 4:12

4. Now begin your own inductive study of Luke 2:21-40. Read through it first, then go through it verse by verse, noting what you observe.

Scripture (Luke 2:21-40 NIV)	Your Observations & Notes
<p><sup>21</sup>On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.</p> <p><sup>22</sup>When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"<sup>[a]</sup>), <sup>24</sup>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."<sup>[b]</sup></p> <p><sup>25</sup>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 upon him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup>Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in</p> <p>a. Exodus 13:2,12 b. Lev. 12:8</p>	

Scripture (Luke 2:21-40 NIV)	Your Observations & Notes
<p>the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: <sup>29</sup>"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss<sup>[c]</sup> your servant in peace.</p> <p><sup>30</sup>For my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the sight of all people, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."</p> <p><sup>33</sup>The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup>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, <sup>35</sup>so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."</p> <p><sup>36</sup>There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.<sup>[d]</sup> She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. <sup>38</sup>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.</p> <p><sup>39</sup>When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.</p> <p>c. Or promised, / now dismiss d. Or widow for 84 years</p>	

5. Next, use this chart to **interpret some key observations**.

a. Select a few of your observations from pages 2-3 that you find most interesting or important. Rewrite these below, and interpret and apply them using the columns to the right.

- b. For each observation, begin to interpret by asking yourself these kinds of questions:
- What does it mean?
  - Why is this important?
  - What does this tell me about the Father? Jesus? The Holy Spirit?
  - **Are there other scriptures that could help me understand this?**

Observation What does it say?	Interpretation What does it mean?
<i>Sample: Joseph, Mary, Simeon, and Anna are each very obedient!</i>	<i>Obedience is a trait of God's most beloved (Abraham, David, Job, etc.). God rewards the most obedient among his children with a special closeness to Him.</i>

*Did you practice cross-referencing (as discussed on pages 2-3) as you made interpretations?*

6. Now consider how you can **apply** the Word to your life. Look for:

- **Sins** you need to avoid
- **Promises** you want to believe
- **Examples** you'd like to follow (remember "SPECK")
- **Commands** you'll try harder to obey
- **Knowledge** you'd like to share

Don't just write things to write them – listen carefully to God's Word and what he seems to be teaching you, and look for relevant things that you're truly stirred to do. Then as you do them, God will help you learn, grow, and help others grow.

Application How do I apply what it means?
<i>I would like to be known as one who obeyed God and knew him intimately. I think I can make some progress toward this especially in the area of:</i> _____

*Is there somewhere else you should write these so you'll actually do them?*

**Do Not Merely Listen to the Word ... Do What it Says** (James 1:20)

7. Application is absolutely critical to learning and growing. Now that you have completed this study of Luke 2:21-40, how will you do what it says? Is there a particular application that you really want to work on this week?

If finding significant applications is hard for you, consider the following questions, and respond to any that help you identify specific ways to apply what you have learned or experienced in this bible study.

*Joseph & Mary obediently went to the temple.*

→ What obedient action might you take?

*Simeon trusted God to show him the Messiah as promised.*

→ What promise from God might you live as if you believed?

*Simeon praised God for showing him the Messiah.*

→ What prayer might you pray?

*Joseph perhaps knew Exodus 13:2 (and he certainly obeyed it).*

→ What verse might you memorize or otherwise know better?

*Anna sacrificially stationed herself in the temple some 60-84 years before fulfilling her prophetic role with Jesus.*

→ Is there a person who you might make yourself more available to spend time with?