

# Can We Trust the Stories About Jesus?

(Luke 2:21-52)

uke was born into a Gentile family and was therefore, unfamiliar with Jewish traditions and laws. So, he writes in a way that is easily understood by people with little biblical knowledge. Luke also gives more attention to historical names and dates than Matthew, Mark, or John. For this reason, Bible translators often choose Luke's Gospel as the first book of the Bible to translate into a new language.

In this section, Luke describes three events and names the people involved. The implication to first century readers is: "If you don't believe me, go ask some of these trustworthy people." Luke wants us to know at least three things about Jesus' childhood. First ...

## **Jesus grows up in a well-respected family (2:21-24).**

For thirty years (3:23), Jesus lives a "normal" life-born a helpless infant, raised in a busy home, and, like his earthly father, employed as a village carpenter. His family is well known in their hometown and has a reputation for being humble and devout.

In Leviticus 12:1-8, God gave Moses ceremonial instructions for the birth of a baby. The first law commands all male babies be circumcised on the eighth day after their birth (Lev. 12:3). This occasion is also a time to publicly announce the name of the newborn. So, eight days after His birth, Mary and Joseph have their son circumcised and announce His name to be "Jesus," as delivered to them by the angel Gabriel (2:21).

The Greek word translated "Jesus" is 'Hasus' (yee-ay-soos'). It is the Greek version of the Hebrew name "Joshua," meaning "Jehovah saves." Since people during this time did not use last names, Jesus would have been referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth" or "Jesus, son of Joseph of Nazareth."

A second Jewish law commands every mother to offer a temple sacrifice thirty-three days after the baby's circumcision (Lev. 12:4-7). The family was to bring a healthy, year-old lamb to sacrifice. However, if a family was too poor to afford a lamb, they could offer two doves or two young pigeons (Lev. 12:8). In Luke 2:24, what sacrifice do Mary and Joseph offer?

From this, we know their financial standing is low. Joseph and Mary are humble, honest people who carefully observe all these Old Testament obligations. Jesus grows up in a well-respected family, but also ...

**Jesus' life is witnessed by many reliable people (2:25-40).**

While they are in the temple offering the sacrifices, Luke mentions two more eyewitnesses of the early life of Jesus. What are the reputations of these two witnesses?

Simeon (2:25) \_\_\_\_\_

Anna (2:37b) \_\_\_\_\_

Luke gives us some background information about these two well-known eyewitnesses with impeccable reputations.

**Simeon** had been told by the Holy Spirit he would not die before seeing the Messiah (2:26). Led by the Holy Spirit, he enters the temple complex on the day of Jesus' dedication to the Lord, as required by the Law (Ex 13:2). Simeon takes the baby in his arms and offers a public prayer. He thanks God for keeping His promise to allow him to see the Messiah before he dies (2:27-31). Then, how does Simeon describe Jesus (2:32)?

Simeon also blesses Mary and Joseph, who are amazed by what is happening (2:33-34a). Next, Simeon looks at Mary and has an alarming prophecy:

*"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."* (2:34b--35).

Those who will oppose Jesus reveal their hardened inner hearts. What warning does the apostle Paul give us about hard-heartedness in Romans 2:5b?

Simeon tells Mary a *sword* will pierce her soul. That prophecy will be fulfilled when she witnesses Jesus' suffering, humiliation, and crucifixion. As Simeon finishes his prophecy, someone else approaches ...

**Anna** is a prophetess in the temple complex. She is an elderly widow whose husband died when she was young. She is well known to every Jew in Jerusalem because she worships God night and day, fasting and praying in the temple. Like the shepherds, she begins to tell the good news to everyone waiting for redemption in Jerusalem by the Messiah (2:36-38).

Luke shows us we can trust the stories about Jesus because: He grows up in a well-respected family, His life is witnessed by many reliable people, and ...

### **Jesus amazes even the best teachers with His spiritual understanding (2:41-52).**

When Jesus is twelve years old, as they did every year, His family travels about 75 miles from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. At the feast's conclusion, Joseph, and Mary head home with a large caravan of travelers, but unknown to his parents, Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem. At first, His parents don't miss Him because they assume He is somewhere in the caravan. When they realize He is absent, they hurriedly return to Jerusalem. Three frantic days later, they find Him sitting among Jewish teachers in the temple, listening and asking them questions (2:41-46). What does verse 47 record?

Joseph and Mary's distress turns to astonishment. Jesus tells His mother they should have known He was in His "*Father's house*," or about His "*Father's business*" (2:49). Joseph and Mary don't understand Jesus' response, but they recognize He is fulfilling His unique purpose. Once again, Mary stores all these things in her heart (2:48-51). What do we read about Jesus in verse 52?

This means He modeled a well-balanced life: mentally (wisdom), physically (stature), spiritually (favor with God), and socially (favor with man).

Based on Luke's careful research, we can believe the stories about Jesus because: He **grows up in a well-respected family**, **His life is witnessed by many reliable people**, and **He amazes even the best teachers with His spiritual understanding**.

Luke has worked hard to gather a "cloud" of eyewitness testimonies for us. So, let's finish this lesson by taking a few minutes to list these witnesses. You can complete the chart on the next page by looking up the references.

Eyewitnesses Luke has mentioned so far:

Reference	Witness(es)
1:5	
1:21-22	
1:26,27	
1:41	
1:58	
2:4	
2:8	
2:25	
2:36	
2:39	
2:44	
2:46	

Jesus commands each of us to be His witness in the place and time He puts us. We should all be actively sharing what we know and have experienced in Christ.

Ask God to help you be His witness.