

A Historical Study On The Book Of Luke
Teaching #20: Joseph and Mary Were Under Law, Not Under Grace – Part One
Luke 2:21-40

Two Observations About Luke 2:21-40

FIRST OBSERVATION: Luke is not a **New Testament Book**.

Often, Luke is referred to as the third book in the new testament. However, the new testament is **not** a set of **27** books, but it is the blood of **1** Savior, Jesus, whose blood was poured out to establish the new testament. The new testament of grace, in contrast to the old testament of law, is the new way God relates to those who have placed their faith in Jesus. It is based upon grace, where the blood of Jesus has secured **eternal forgiveness of sins**, unlike the old testament of law that secured temporal forgiveness of sins.

Let's look at a few verses that support this understanding of the new testament.

Let's start with the words of Jesus.

Matthew 26:26-28 (Webster Bible Translation, see also the King James Version; see also Luke 22:20)

*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; **For this is my blood of the new testament**, which is shed for many for the remission of sin.*

Note: Some translations use the word *covenant* rather than *testament*. However, the Greek word Matthew uses is **diathéké** and is translated as both testament and covenant. There is **not** a new testament that starts at the birth of Jesus and a new covenant that starts with his death. This is a misunderstanding many people have, yet it is biblically inaccurate.

The writer of Hebrews explained to the Jewish people that the new testament went into effect **when Jesus died**.

Hebrews 9:15-17

*For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant [testament – diathéké], that those who are called [invited and respond in faith – see Hebrews 3:1 and Matthew 24 about the wedding invitation – same Greek word] may receive [by faith] the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom [full payment for sins] to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant [testament]. In the case of a will [diathéké – covenant or testament], it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, **because a will [diathéké – covenant, testament] is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.***

The death of Jesus to pay the sin debt of the Jewish people, and for all people, reached back to the sins committed under the law (and all the way back to Adam – see Romans 5:12-21) and forward to all sins committed in the future by all people.

The writer of Hebrews wrote to explain to the Jewish people that the old testament of law was **set aside** and the new testament was **established** through the blood of Jesus.

Hebrews 7:18-22

*The former regulation [the old testament of law] is **set aside** because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect [righteous]), and a better hope [the new testament of grace] is **introduced**, by which we draw near to God [enter into an eternal, close relationship with God]...Jesus has become the guarantor [through his blood – guaranteeing eternal forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, eternal life, and eternal closeness with God] of a better covenant [testament – a new and better way of relating to God; it is better because forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life are freely provided and are received by faith].*

Hebrews 8:6-12

But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant [new testament of grace] of which he is mediator is superior to the old one [the works old testament of law], since the new covenant [testament] is established on better promises [eternal forgiveness from God, eternal righteousness before God, eternal closeness with God, and eternal life with God – all are received by faith in Jesus]. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant [testament of law], no place would have been sought for another [new testament of grace]. But God found fault with the people [the Jewish people failed to obey the law written on stone, and the Gentiles failed to obey the law written on their hearts – Romans 2] and said:

“The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant [testament]...For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Because the Jewish people failed to obey the law, as well as the Gentiles, God established a new covenant, a new testament, based upon the full, forever, and finished work of Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews wrote to explain to the Jewish people that the old testament of law was **obsolete and outdated** since Jesus **established** the new testament of grace in his blood.

Hebrews 8:13

By calling [in Jeremiah 31:31-34] this covenant [new testament of grace] “new,” he [God] has made the first one [old testament of law] obsolete; and what is obsolete [not useable – like old typewriters] and outdated [no good – like outdated milk] will soon disappear [the law disappeared when the Jewish temple was destroyed in AD 70].

The useable and good testament now is the new testament of grace established in the blood of Jesus.

Joseph and Mary related to God based upon the old testament of law, because the new testament did not go into effect until Jesus died.

This leads us to the second observation about Luke 2:21-40.

SECOND OBSERVATION: Mary and Joseph followed the requirements of the **Old Testament Law**.

The word law is used **FIVE** times in Luke 2:22-40.

Where Does The Old Testament Law Begin And End?

THE BEGINNING OF THE LAW – The law started when the animals' blood was shed (Exodus 24:5-8).

Exodus 24:5-8

Then he [Moses] sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant [testament] and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey." Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant [testament] that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

THE ENDING OF THE LAW – The law ended when Jesus' blood was shed (John 19:30; Romans 10:4).

Romans 10:4

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

John 19:30

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus finished, ended the old testament of law when he was sacrificed as the final sacrifice for all sins, for all people, and for all time. With his final sacrifice, the new testament of grace began.

This is why the writer of Hebrews wrote:

Hebrews 10:18

And where these [sins] have been forgiven [through the final sacrifice of Jesus], sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary [sacrificing animals at the temple in Jerusalem was no longer necessary when the writer wrote in AD 65].

Two Great Miss-Teachings About The Bible

Miss-Teaching #1: The great miss-teaching of the Bible is that the new testament begins with the birth of Jesus and the new covenant begins with the death of Jesus.

This is a lack of understanding that the Greek word for testament and covenant is the same (diathéké) in the Bible. Some translations use the English word **covenant** and others **testament**. Click below to see the two translations of diathéké.

<https://biblehub.com/greek/1242.htm>

This helps us understand that the new testament and new covenant are exactly the same, which then helps us understand that the new testament/covenant starts with the death of Jesus, not his birth.

The birth and life of Jesus took place while the old testament of law was in effect.

The death of Jesus ended the old testament of law and began the new testament of grace.

Miss-Teaching #2: The great miss-teaching of the Bible is that the old testament is about 39 books and the new testament is about 27 books.

Three Essential Facts To Know To Understand The Book Of Luke

Essential Fact #1: Luke is not the **third** book in the new testament, because the new testament is not about books. It's about the blood of Jesus poured out for the forgiveness of our sins.

Essential Fact #2: Luke is the **forty-second** book in the Bible.

Essential Fact #3: Luke mostly **covers** the historical events happening under the law.

We learn from the writer of Hebrews that the law was a **SHADOW** of the good things that were coming through Jesus when he established the new testament of grace in his blood. The **REALITY** is Jesus.

Hebrews 10:1 (see also Colossians 2:16-17)

*The law is only a **shadow** of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.*

The real sacrifice for sins was Jesus, not the animals. The animals sacrificed at the temple in Jerusalem were a shadow of Jesus sacrificed at the cross outside of Jerusalem.

With this background, let's examine Joseph and Mary following the requirements of the law.

Joseph and Mary Follow The Requirements Of The Law

1. Joseph and Mary have Jesus **CIRCUMCISED** according to the law.

Luke 2:21

*On the eighth day, when it was time to **circumcise** the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.*

Leviticus 12:3

*On the eighth day the boy is to be **circumcised**.*

The circumcision of Jesus was probably at the home where Mary and Joseph stayed. It was common for the Jewish people to have a child circumcised in their homes.

Mary could not go to the temple in Jerusalem for purification until 33 days after the circumcision of Jesus.

Leviticus 12:3-4

*On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait **thirty-three days to be purified** from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary [temple in Jerusalem] until the days of her purification are over.*

After 33 days, according to the Law of Moses, Mary was to go to the temple for purification.

2. Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple for Mary's **PURIFICATION** according to the law.

Luke 2:22 (see Leviticus 12:3-4)

*When the time came for the **purification** rites required by the **Law of Moses**, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem...*

REALITY: Our hearts are purified by faith in Jesus.

Hebrews 9:14

*...how much more will **the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, **purify** our consciences from works of death, so that we may serve the living God!*

Acts 15:9

*He did not discriminate between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles], for **he purified their hearts** by faith [faith in Jesus not works of the law].*

3. Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple for **PRESENTATION** according to the law.

Luke 2:22-23

*When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to **present** him to the Lord (as it is written in **the Law of the Lord**, "Every **firstborn** male is to be consecrated to the Lord").*

Exodus 13:1-2

*The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every **firstborn** male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal."*

REALITY: Jesus was the firstborn son of Mary who was presented to God to be sacrificed for our sins.

4. Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple to offer a **SACRIFICE** according to the law.

Luke 2:21-24

*When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every **firstborn** male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), 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."*

Leviticus 12:6-8

*'When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a **sin offering**. He shall offer them before the Lord to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood. " "These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.' "*

Mary's firstborn son, Jesus, would be the sin-offering for the world.

REALITY: Jesus offered himself as the full, final, and forever sacrifice for all sins and for all people.

Hebrews 7:27

He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

Hebrews 10:9-10

Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first [testament of law] to establish the second [testament of grace]. And by that will [the new testament of grace established in the blood of Jesus], we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all [for all sins for all time].

1 John 2:2

He is the atoning [full payment] sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Let’s continue our study of Joseph and Mary living during the time of the old testament law.

5. Simeon praises God at the temple for the SALVATION Jesus will bring to Israel and the Gentiles.

Luke 2:25-35

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous [he externally followed the law] and devout [he was committed to the observance of the law]. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel [when the Messiah would come and console the Jewish people from all the suppression and aggression of the nations who hated them – see Isaiah 40; 42; 46; 49], and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation [the angel Gabriel said, “you shall name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins], which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

The Christ, Messiah, would bring salvation to the people of the nations.

- He would bring salvation as Savior from our sins by dying for us and rising from the dead.
- He would bring salvation as King by ruling and reigning on earth.

Ephesians 2:8-9

...in the coming ages [when Jesus rules and reigns as King] he [God] might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace [unconditional love and unmerited kindness of God] you have been saved [saved from death and the judgment upon our sins, saved to being made alive with Christ and brought into eternal life –], through faith [trust in Jesus]—and this [salvation] is not from yourselves, it [salvation] is the gift of God— not by works [of the law or any works of any religious system, spiritual disciplines, and moral standards], so that no one can boast [no one will say “Look at me! I saved myself through good works.” Rather, we will say, “Look at Jesus! He saved me through his finished work on the cross and through his resurrection.].

Simeon quoted from:

Isaiah 42:6

"I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.

Isaiah 49:6

"I will also make You a light for the nations, to bring My salvation to the ends of the earth."

God's heart is to see people saved from all nations.

Jesus is for all people and for all nations.

The nations need light. They are in darkness. There is warfare, crime, corruption, control, and conflict throughout the nations and in the neighborhoods of the nations.

The nations need a Savior.

The nations need a King.

According to Isaiah, the Christ, the Messiah, would be a light to the Gentile nations, showing them who the real God is and how they can know God.

The Christ, the Messiah, would come from the nation of Israel and would be a light for all nations.

As Savior, Jesus established the new testament of grace in his blood when he died for all people in all nations.

Jesus, in the Great Commission, sends his disciples into all nations to share the good news of Jesus and the new testament he established in his blood.

As King, Jesus will return to rule and reign, establishing peace on earth.

Thanks for being a part of this Bible Study!

All verses are NIV unless otherwise noted.

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