

**A Historical Study On The Book Of Luke**  
**Teaching #23: Joseph and Mary Were Under Law, Not Grace – Part Four (Anna)**  
**Luke 2:36-39**

Joseph and Mary were under the law of Moses (Galatians 4:4) and followed the requirements of the law after the birth of Jesus. The requirements of the law are prescribed in Exodus 13:1-16 and Leviticus 12.

**In our previous studies, we learned that:**

1. Joseph and Mary had Jesus CIRCUMCISED according to the law.
2. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple for Mary's PURIFICATION according to the law.

Note: The *temple* is mentioned about **20** times in Luke. In Luke 19:41-44 and 21:5-6, Jesus made a startling announcement that the temple would be destroyed. It was destroyed in AD 70.

Arising in the place of the physical temple of law is now the spiritual temple of grace where each person who believes becomes a spiritual, living stone in the spiritual temple of God that is being built throughout all nations all over the world. From this spiritual temple of grace, the good news of God's grace flows throughout the world (Ephesians 2:11-24; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Revelation 21-22). For more insight into the spiritual temple of grace, read my blog, *Are The New Heaven And Earth Already Here?*. [CLICK HERE to read](#)

3. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple for PRESENTATION according to the law.
4. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple to offer a SACRIFICE according to the law.
5. Simeon praised God at the temple for the SALVATION Jesus will bring to Israel and the Gentiles.

**In our previous study, we examined the painful words of Simeon to Mary in Luke 2:34-35.**

We are now on #6 of how Joseph and Mary were under the law and not under grace.

6. Anna praises God at the temple for the REDEMPTION Jesus will bring to Jerusalem.

**Luke 2:36-38**

*There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them [Joseph, Mary, and Simeon] at that very moment [when Simeon was speaking to Mary], she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*

In our next study, we will examine more fully the redemption of Jerusalem.

In this study, we will turn our attention toward Anna and the Temple.

**Luke 2:36**

There was also a **prophet**, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher...

As a prophet, Anna spoke to or taught the people of Israel in her community. The basis of her **speaking** and **teaching** would have been from the Jewish Scriptures. As a speaker/teacher, she would have educated people about the Jewish Scriptures and helped those in her community understand the coming of the Messiah/Christ as the Savior-King. We see in Luke 2:38 that she **spoke** about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. So it seems Anna had a **speaking** and **teaching** influence in her community, which would have been in the city Jerusalem. It is possible that when people came to the temple in Jerusalem, she taught them at the temple.

Teaching at the temple was common.

- **RABBIS** taught in the temple (Luke 2:41-47 – Jesus as a 12-year-old child is sitting in the temple asking the rabbis questions and also providing answers himself).
- **JESUS** taught in the temple (Matthew 21:31; Luke 19:47; 21:37; John 7:28; 8:28).
- **PETER** and **JOHN** taught in the temple (Acts 3:1-4:22; acts 5:21-42).

Because teaching in the temple was common, it is highly probable that Anna taught in the temple.

### **Luke 2:36**

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of **Penuel** [also Peniel], of the tribe [family tree] of **Asher**...

**Penuel** – why does Luke mention Penuel (Peniel)?

Possibly, Penuel had been a well-known and well-respected person in the Jerusalem area. Therefore, Theophilus would have been more likely to trust what Luke was writing about Anna since she came from a well-known and well-respected family (Remember, Luke is writing to Theophilus – see Luke 1).

**Penuel** is a Jewish name that goes back to **Genesis 33:28-31** when Jacob (who was renamed Israel; Jacob was the son of Isaac who was the son of Abraham) named the place where he “struggled with God” Peniel. Peniel, also translated Penuel, is also mentioned as two different people’s name in 1 Chronicles 4:4; 8:25.

NOTE: Jacob was the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham. Jacob had 12 sons that became the twelve tribes of Israel.

For more information about Penuel: [CLICK HERE](#)

Penuel was of the tribe of **Asher**.

**Asher** was the 8<sup>th</sup> son of Jacob – Genesis 35:21-26.

Jacob had twelve sons who formed the nation of Israel.

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, **Asher**, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

Jacob was the son of Isaac.

Isaac was the son of Abraham.

Let's return to Luke 2:36-38

### **Luke 2:36-38**

*There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel [also Peniel], of the tribe [family tree] of Asher... She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. **She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying...***

Anna related to God at the Temple in Jerusalem as she awaited the arrival of the Christ/Messiah. Her relationship with God included being present at the temple consistently (she possibly lived and worked on the temple grounds) and worshipping (relating to) God through fasting (foregoing eating so she could focus on praying) and praying.

### **Legalistic Teachers...**

Unfortunately, **legalistic teachers** use the words of Luke to describe Anna for the purpose of implementing their legalistic, guilt-ridden and pride-driven system of way relating to God.

Legalistic teachers will compare Anna's "devotion to God", that included prayer, fasting, and consistently being at the temple to believers "devotion to God" who attend their church or small group, or who participate in their discipleship ministry.

Rather than helping people understand how Anna related to God under the law of Moses, which is much different from how we relate to God under grace, **legalistic teachers** will give us a list of ways to be like Anna as she "*models for us how to be in relationship with God.*" This list of ways is called **LEGALISM**.

What is legalism?

- Legalism is a list-based way of relating to God that is to be followed daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly so people can be "close to God and grow in their relationship with him."
- Legalism is a disciplined-based, dedicated-based way of relating to God so people can be "close to him and grow in their relationship with him."
- Legalism is a formula-based, acronym-based way of relating to God such as **A.C.T.S.** and **P.R.A.Y.** so people can be "close to God and grow in their relationship with him."

**A**(adoration) – tell God how good he is

**C** (confession) – tell God about all your sins so that you can clear up the blocked closeness between you and God.

**T** (thanksgiving) – thank God that he has forgiven you now that all your sins are confessed. Thank God for all that he has done for you and given to you (gratitude)

**S** (supplication) – talk to God about what is on your heart and mind

**P** (praise) – praise God for all that he has done and for who he is

**R** (repent) – acknowledge your sins to God

**A** (ask) – apologize to God for your sins and ask for his forgiveness.

**Y** (Yield) – give yourself to God for his will and work to be done in and through you.

I was entrapped in all the above legalistic lists and acronyms. Living by faith in what Jesus had done for me was far from my mind. Honestly, I had not been taught what Jesus had done for me. Rather, while involved in toxic discipleship, my relationship with God was not based on what Jesus had done for me through his death and resurrection. Instead, my relationship with God was based upon legalistic lists that I would practice to “grow in my relationship with God” and acronyms that I would follow so I could “**remove** any sins blocking fellowship with God and **restore** closeness with him.”

In addition to the lists and acronyms were the “spiritual disciplines” that I was taught to practice so I could “grow in my relationship with God.”

I was **dedicated** (committed) to **adhering** to the legalistic list, acronyms, and disciplines so I could remove sins blocking closeness with God and so I could grow in my relationship with him.

This was legalism...and I was entrapped in it.

In legalism, people display their **dedication** (commitment) to God, and may I add to “discipleship,” by faithfully **adhering** to the legalistic list, acronyms, and disciplines.

What are some of the requirements on the legalistic list?

- Have a daily quiet time (devotion) by “carving out time for God.” Legalism seeks to motivate believers to “set aside at least 15 minutes each day to spend with God” just as “Anna set aside time for God each day.” If possible, legalistic teachers/disciplers say that “30 minutes or 1 hour would be better than 15 minutes.”

Believers who are entrapped in this legalistic approach to God feel good about their relationship with God when they have their quiet time, but when they “miss their quiet time,” they feel guilty...distant from God...as if God is disappointed with them. In legalism, missing one’s quiet time makes for a miserable day.

This was me for about 7 years, until I learned about the gospel of God’s grace, which is everything Jesus did for me to eternally forgive all my sins, make me righteous and holy through his blood, make me spiritually alive with Christ, bring me close to God. Through the understanding of the gospel of grace, I was freed from legalism and finally began to grow spiritually, which impacted my life in many other ways.

What are some other requirements on the legalistic list?

- Journaling (some people like to journal, and they are free to do so...when I was freed from legalism, I threw all my journals away. They were all self-focused...I was pre-occupied with how I was doing or not doing in this pride-driven, guilt-ridden world of legalism.)

- Reading and studying the Bible to “show myself approved unto God” – the verse in 2 Timothy 2:15 was taken out of context and imposed on me.
- Participating in groups
- Leading groups
- Multiplying groups
- Attending “church”
- Being disciplined
- Making disciples
- Multiplying disciples
- Having an accountability partner to hold me accountable to the list
- Abiding in Jesus by practicing spiritual disciplines
- Being obedient

For several short articles on the above list of items and the verses taken out of context to promote them, [CLICK HERE](#).

NOTE: In my book, *Toxic Discipleship*, I write about legalistic discipleship and how a person can break free from its bondage. It is available on Amazon. The link is below.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CNN8PB7L>

Believers are told if they practice the actions on the list, then they will be close to God and grow in their relationship with him. However, as we see in Colossians 1:3-8, spiritual growth is produced as a person learns about the gospel of grace (all that God has freely, fully, and forever done for us through Jesus because of his kindness – see Ephesians 2:1-10), which is the word of truth ([click on this LINK to see Colossians #6 for a teaching about how Grace Produces Growth](#))

### **Colossians 1:3-8**

*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints— the faith and love proceeding from the hope stored up for you in heaven, of which you have already heard in **the word of truth, the gospel** that has come to you. All over the world **this gospel** is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you **heard it and truly understood the grace of God**. (Berean Study Bible)*

### **Back to Anna...**

To use Anna as a model for people’s relationship with God is burdensome for many people.

Telling believers *to be like devoted and committed like Anna* is to place unrealistic expectations on people, causing many people to **feel the weight** of “being like Anna” and to **feel the guilt** when they fail to be like her.

In the new testament of grace, we all have our own, unique relationship with God.

In the new testament of grace, God said we will know him from the least to the greatest (**Hebrews 8:11**), meaning, each one in the new testament of grace will have their own personal relationship with God that is not driven by legalistic requirements and expectations, but is based upon what Jesus has done for us, leading us know God as our loving Father (Galatians **4:4-6**).

### **Hebrews 8:11**

*...they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.*

Our individual relationship with God is based upon all God has done for us in Jesus and how each of us are individually designed by God.

For example, if you enjoy having a quiet time and journaling, you are free to do so. However, no one is free to create a list of items for you to practice to be close to God relationally and grow spiritually. We do not relate to God through a list of practices but through the love of a person – Jesus, who loved us, gave himself for us, and now lives in us.

### **Galatians 4:4-6**

*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, **God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."***

Remember, Anna worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem under the law of Moses. Jesus, the child she was beholding, came to establish the new testament of grace to free people from the law so they could know God as their loving Father.

This relationship of knowing God as Father is what Jesus spoke about to the woman at the well.

Jesus told **the woman at the well**, in **John 4**, that people would **no longer worship** (relate to God) at this mountain (where the Samaritans worshipped God) or that mountain (the temple in Jerusalem, which is where Anna worshipped God), where the Jews worshiped under the old testament of law at the temple in Jerusalem.

Under the new testament of grace, we worship by the Spirit, where relate to God as our loving Father, assured of his full forgiveness and complete acceptance (See Galatians 4:4-6).

Whereas Anna worship God at the physical temple in Jerusalem, the temple of law, believers in Jesus now form the spiritual temple of God, the temple of grace. This temple is God's every growing family of grace, that he dwells in by his Spirit, consisting of Jews and Gentiles from all over the world (Ephesians 2:11-21).

Arising in the place of the physical temple of law is now the spiritual temple of grace where each person who believes becomes a spiritual, living stone in the spiritual temple of God that is being built throughout all nations all over the world. From this spiritual temple of grace, the good news of God's grace flows throughout the world (Ephesians 2:11-24; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Revelation 21-22). For more insight into the spiritual temple of grace, read my blog, ***Are The New Heaven And Earth Already Here?*** [CLICK HERE to read](#)

In our previous study, we saw that parts of the old testament of law were **SHADOWS** of Jesus and the new testament of grace (Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:16-17). Jesus, and his establishment of the new testament of grace, is the **REALITY**.

Anna worshipped God in the shadows of the law.

We worship God in the reality of grace.

To learn more about this, see:

- **Colossians #20** – *The Reality Is Found In Christ*: [Click Here](#)
- **Hebrews #42**: *The Law Can't Bring You Close To God*: [Click Here](#)

The **temple**, where Anna worshipped God, was a shadow of the reality of the indwelling presence of Jesus within us and a shadow of the reality of God's family of grace, his spiritual temple of grace.

We learn more about this in Ephesians 2:11-22.

### **Ephesians 2:11-22**

*Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time [before the new testament of grace] you [Gentiles] were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise [the Gentiles did not know about the covenants in the Jewish Scriptures foretelling the salvation to come to the Jews and Gentiles], without hope and without God in the world [the Gentiles did not know who the real God is – they worshiped false, created gods]. But **now** in Christ Jesus [through his establishment of the new testament of grace] you who once were far away [Gentiles] have been brought near [close to the real God] by the blood of Christ [the blood of Jesus established the new testament of grace, bringing eternal forgiveness of sins and closeness with God].*

*For he [Jesus] himself is our [Jews and Gentiles] peace, who has made the two groups [Jews and Gentiles] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility [law of Moses that divided Jews and Gentiles until the new testament was established in the blood of Jesus – see Acts 10], by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations [requiring Jews to not eat the Gentiles food or enter a Gentile's home]. His purpose was to create in himself **one new humanity** [one new family of grace] out of the two [uniting Jews and Gentiles into one family of grace], thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

*He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. **For through him we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access to the Father by one Spirit.** Consequently, you [Gentiles] are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household [the spiritual family of grace], built on the foundation of the apostles [the apostles of Jesus and other apostles who carried the message of Jesus to the Gentile nations] and prophets [the prophets in the Jewish Scriptures who foretold of the Christ to come], with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone [as the cornerstone, Jesus brings Jews and Gentiles together into one spiritual temple of grace in the spiritual, new Jerusalem - see*

Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelations 21-22), in contrast to the physical temple of law in earthly Jerusalem where Anna worshipped]. **In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become A HOLY TEMPLE in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**

Note: This holy temple is the new Jerusalem (Isaiah 65) that John saw coming down from heaven in Revelation 21-22.

Neither Jews or Gentiles must worship (be close to God, relate to God) God at a specific place, as in the days of the law and the temple, because God now indwells us by his Spirit.

Believers are his spiritual temple that extends throughout all nations.

We must remember that **Anna, like Joseph and Mary, lived under the old testament of law.** They worshipped at the temple in Jerusalem.

However, under the new testament of grace, **we are the spiritual temple of God all over the world.** We live under the new testament of grace where, through faith in Jesus, we relate to God as our loving Father who has forgiven us fully and accepts us completely based upon the finished work of Jesus. We have free and full access to God as our Father. **Ephesians 3:12** states,

*In him and through faith in him we may approach [relate to] God with freedom and confidence.*

This is what Jesus was referring to in John 4 when he talked with the woman at the well.

We are free from having to adhere to legalistic requirements, practices, and expectations to relate to God that are placed upon believers by disciplers and ministry and church leaders.

We are free from having to worship God at this place or that place...in this way or that way (whatever this way and that way may be).

We are free from having to follow lists, acronyms, and formulas to relate to God that are placed upon us.

Jesus has set us free (Galatians 5:1).

### **Galatians 5:1**

*It is for freedom [from legalistic, law-based lists and expectations] that Christ has set us free [Jesus set us free from having to relate to God through legalistic, law based lists imposed on us by spiritual leaders]. Stand firm, then [in your freedom purchased for you by Jesus], and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery [legalistic leaders have no power over us with their lists, other than the power we give them].*

We are free to relate to God as our loving Father, knowing we are fully forgiven and totally accepted by him. As a result, we can be confident in our relationship with him, assured of his love and acceptance, and not fearing his wrath, rejection, or disappointment because we failed to adhere to the legalistic requirements or follow the traditional rules placed upon us by disciplers, and ministry and church leaders.



**We need pastors and Bible teachers** who will help believers see the difference between relating to God under law, as Anna related to God, and relating to God under grace, which is why Jesus died on the cross. The child, Jesus, who Anna spoke about, would be the child who would end the old testament of law and begin the new testament of grace (Mathew 26:28; Luke 22:20; Romans 10:4). **We desperately need pastors, Bible teachers, and small group leaders who will help believers see these differences in the Bible.**

Let's return to **Luke 2:36-38** as Anna worshipped God under the law in the temple in Jerusalem.

*Coming up to them* [Anna coming up to Joseph and Mary in the temple] *at that very moment* [when Mary and Joseph were in the Temple for the purification rites, and when Simeon completed his praise to God for Jesus and concluding his words to Mary], *she* [Anna] *gave thanks to God and spoke about the child...*

Anna Gave thanks (praised God) for the birth of Jesus and spoke about his identity as the Christ.

We (believers in Jesus in the new testament of grace) give thanks to God because what this child did when he, as an adult, shed his blood on the cross to establish the new testament of grace.

We learn in Ephesians 1:3-3:21 that we praise God because he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ:

- we are holy (cleansed of all sins) and blameless (cleared sin record)
- we are his loved sons and daughters
- fully forgiven
- we are indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus,
- we call God our loving Father
- we are valuable members of God's spiritual family of grace
- we are the ever-growing spiritual temple of God in all nations
- we are saved
- we are created for good works
- we are loved by Jesus

Remember, the title of our study is: **Joseph and Mary Were Under Law, Not Grace.**

This is why Mary and Joseph practiced the law of Moses after Jesus was born.

We are on part four of this study.

We are examining how Joseph and Mary fulfilled the requirements of the law after Jesus was born by following the requirements of the law as stated in Exodus 13 and Leviticus 12.

**In our previous studies, we learned that:**

1. Joseph and Mary had Jesus **CIRCUMCISED** according to the law.
2. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple for Mary's **PURIFICATION** according to the law.

3. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple for **PRESENTATION** according to the law.
4. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple to offer a **SACRIFICE** according to the law.
5. Simeon praised God at the temple for the **SALVATION** Jesus will bring to Israel and the Gentiles.

**We are now on #6 of how Joseph and Mary were under the law and not under grace.**

6. Anna praised God at the temple for the **REDEMPTION** Jesus will bring to Jerusalem.

In this study, we examined Anna as she worshipped at the temple in Jerusalem.

In our next study, we will examine **the redemption of Jerusalem by Jesus.**

Let's complete this study by moving to #7.

7. Joseph and Mary completed at the temple all the **REQUIREMENTS** of the law.

#### **Luke 2:39**

*When Joseph and Mary **had done everything required by the Law of the Lord...***

Luke 2:39 underscores that Mary and Joseph were under the law of Moses. This is the same law that Jesus ended on the cross when he said "It is finished."

With his death, Jesus established the new testament of grace where we are **forgiven eternally** and **know God personally.**

8. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus leave the temple and **RETURN** to Nazareth of Galilee.

#### **Luke 2:39**

*When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, **they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.***

Remember, Israel was made up of three sections:

- The northern section of Israel was **Galilee.**
- The central section of Israel was **Samaria.**
- The southern section of Israel was **Judea** (Jerusalem was in the mountains of Judea).

Joseph, Mary, and Jesus returned to northern Israel, Galilee, to the town of Nazareth.

Thanks for being a part of this Bible Study!

*All verses are NIV unless otherwise noted.*

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