



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## **Luke 1:26-31, 2:22, 25-35** **New Revised Standard Version** **December 23, 2018**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 23, 2018**, is from **Luke 1:26-31, 2:22, 25-35**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Luke 1:26) In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,**

During the sixth month after Elizabeth had conceived John the Baptist, the angel Gabriel, who had appeared to Zechariah in the temple and had foretold the conception and birth of John the Baptist, was sent by God to visit the virgin Mary, who would soon become the mother of Jesus the Messiah. Whereas John's parents were of the tribe of Levi and lived in Judea, Mary and Joseph were of the tribe of Judah and they lived north of Judea in land formerly occupied by the northern kingdom, called the Kingdom of Israel. Since Elizabeth and Mary were related, Mary may also have had some Levite priests in her ancestry. Joseph, who would become Jesus' legal father, was of the house of David of the tribe of Judah.

**(Luke 1:27) to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.**

Some Bible teachers state that the virgin Mary was probably only 12 or 13 years old when the angel Gabriel appeared to her; however, just because some rabbis say a girl at that time could be engaged or betrothed to be married at the age of 12 and married at the age of 13 is no indication that Mary was that young. Mary was probably younger than 20 years old, but the Bible does not indicate her age. In my opinion, God would have chosen an older girl to bear the infant Jesus for her sake as well as for the sake of her Son. Mary would travel great distances for that historical period of time, and she would face hardships both before and after Jesus' birth. An older girl could probably deal with these hardships easier than a very young girl. Mary would probably travel 90 to 100 miles (a 3 or 4 day journey at least) to visit Elizabeth before John's birth and then travel back to Nazareth. She would travel about that same distance again when she traveled to Bethlehem with Joseph (a 3 or 4 day journey at least) immediately before the birth of Jesus. After Jesus' birth, she would travel to Egypt to save Him from the murderous King Herod. If Mary were a mother older than 13 years old, she would be stronger emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually and better able to do all these things. One can ask themselves, "What age of a girl would God most likely choose in this unique situation; especially since God knew beforehand what Mary would face in the future after she conceived Jesus?" The name "Mary" means "exalted one." The name "Joseph" means "May he (God) add (sons)." Though tradition seems to teach that Joseph was a much older man than Mary, the Bible does not tell us his age either; so, he may have been close to Mary's age. Since the Bible simply does not tell us the ages of Joseph and Mary, all guesses are merely speculative. Joseph was of the house of David, and the Bible foretold that the Messiah would be of the house of David. Joseph would legally adopt Jesus, the Son of God. Later, God would legally adopt all who would believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and receive Him as their Lord and Savior. Jesus declared that He was the root of (or the foundation of or the beginning of or the life-giving means of sustaining) the House of David as well as a descendant of the House of David, saying "I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star" (Revelation 22:16).

**(Luke 1:28) And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”**

The angel Gabriel did not appear to Mary in a way that would frighten her. We are not told that he appeared to her in a dream. He may have simply knocked on the door of her home and greeted her. His words encouraged her with a standard formal greeting, plus the revelation that his visit was to bring her a blessing from God and not the judgment of God, for God was with her and favored her. For the Lord to be with you is an indication that the Lord will help you. Mary may have wondered what God wanted and why she would especially need God’s help.

**(Luke 1:29) But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.**

Mary’s first response to the angel was perplexity or confusion. She had no idea what the angel might want or what message God had sent the angel to bring her. The title “angel” means “messenger.” As far as we know, nothing in her previous experience had prepared her to expect a meeting with an angel. She had a brief moment to wonder why God favored her and an angel had appeared to her.

**(Luke 1:30) The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.**

Perhaps the initial appearance of the angel did not frighten Mary, but perplexity could lead to fear. The angel came to give her a message, and he did not want her to be frightened by his message or by him. He had not come to give her bad news, but good news that she had found favor with God; God intended to bless her and give her the opportunity to serve Him. To comfort and encourage her, the angel mentioned twice that she was favored. God had His own reasons for “favoring” Mary above all other women; but surely, He had prepared her mentally, physically, morally, and spiritually in advance to be the mother of His Son—just as He had prepared Moses in advance to save His people from bondage in Egypt. Jesus would save His people from their sins, so I believe God gave His Son the best mother possible to nurture and train Him in God’s law, love, and mercy.

The parents of John the Baptist were “righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord” (Luke 1:6). We have good reasons to believe that these spiritual traits and righteous way of life would also characterize the mother that God had prepared to be the mother of His only begotten Son, Jesus.

**(Luke 1:31) And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.**

Mary had found favor with God because God had chosen and prepared her to be the mother of Jesus before she was born, as the psalmist so eloquently declared about himself and all of God’s chosen ones: “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13). The Bible does not say that Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit before she was born (as the Bible teaches about John the Baptist), but God could so arrange events and people in Mary’s life to prepare her to serve as the mother of the Son of God. Mary had the moral, spiritual, mental, and physical qualities that would make her a perfect mother for the Son of God. The angel told her to name her son “Jesus,” which means “Yahweh (or God) Saves.”

**(Luke 2:22) 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**

In Jesus’ day, the circumcision of a baby boy would be at home and usually be performed by the head of the family on the eighth day. The rite of purification was done by a priest forty days after the birth of a male child, according to Leviticus 12:1-8. Jesus would have been taken to the temple 32 days after His circumcision when Mary could legally enter the temple courtyard for the priest to make atonement for her. Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to be seen by a priest for the ceremony. In everything, they obeyed the law of Moses. To present Jesus to the Lord was to present Him to God, His heavenly Father, which the law required of all firstborn males (see Exodus 13). Knowing Jesus was the Son of God, Mary had much more to ponder as she took part in the ceremony.

**(Luke 2:25) Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him.**

Luke continued to describe the moral and spiritual character of those who made comments about or had a significant relationship to the baby Jesus. Simeon was a righteous man, which meant he lived by faith in God, and he demonstrated his faith in God by his obedience to God's Law. He was devout because he did what God required beyond mere human expectations of what it meant to be "religious." He lived in faith and the Holy Spirit rested on him. He lived daily with the expectation that the Messiah would come as God had promised him. Because his way of life was consistent with the truth and the Law of God, people respected him and saw that he was particularly loyal to God and sought to serve God to the best of his ability.

**(Luke 2:26) It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.**

The Holy Spirit revealed the truth about the coming Messiah to Simeon. The Holy Spirit also inspired Luke to record God's assessment of Simeon. Because Simeon lived by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit, God called him to meet Jesus and His parents to encourage them and bear witness to them that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. They probably needed this reassurance then, because they would soon need to flee to Egypt because of the danger to Jesus' life (as recorded by the Gospel of Matthew).

**(Luke 2:27) Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law,**

Luke described the work of the Holy Spirit in Simeon as "rested on him" and "revealed to him" and "guided" him. The Holy Spirit can do all of these things and more in the lives of those who live by faith in the Messiah as Simeon did (he lived with faith in the Messiah who was to come, as did the prophets and people of faith in the Old Testament). The Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers so they can live righteous and devout lives (as He did in Simeon's life). God arranged the perfect timing for Simeon to meet

Jesus and His parents when they went to the temple in obedience to the ceremonial law of God. All of them obeyed God's law and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in faith, and they all received a blessing from God.

**(Luke 2:28) Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,**

Simeon was obviously a follower of the Holy Spirit, who devoutly worshiped God in the temple. Because the Holy Spirit rested on him, when he took Jesus into his arms, Mary and Joseph obviously trusted him. Simeon's response to holding the baby Jesus was praise to God, which is the response of all believers when they hold a baby; they know that every child is a gift of God. But Simeon's response was more than this because he knew that God had fulfilled His promise to him as he held the baby Jesus in his arms.

**(Luke 2:29) "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;**

Simeon praised God and then explained that God had fulfilled His promise to him. He was holding in his arms the LORD's Messiah (Luke 2:26). He was seeing the consolation of Israel: God's solution to the slavery of His people—not just the solution to their enslavement by Rome or their enslavement by corrupt religious leaders, but also the solution to the slavery to sin that afflicted all people and that would eventually lead the religious leaders to crucify Jesus. Having fulfilled His promise to Simeon, Simeon said that God was also preparing him to die in peace according to His promise.

**(Luke 2:30) for my eyes have seen your salvation,**

Jesus is God's salvation. Jesus' name means "God saves" or "God is salvation." Jesus, in His own Person, is God's salvation. Salvation is by and through Jesus and His work. By the very nature of who Jesus is, the Son of God and the promised Messiah, Jesus would do all that God promised and required to make salvation justly and mercifully possible for all who would believe in Him as Lord and Savior: as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, as Salvation.

**(Luke 2:31) which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,**

Simeon revealed that Jesus was born in the presence of all peoples in the sense that He was seen by those of lowly and humble estate and He would be seen by the wise and wealthy as Matthew recorded regarding the wise men that came from the east to see the baby Jesus. During his ministry, Jesus (as the salvation of God) would be seen by people of every class and rank, and some would confess that Jesus Christ was their Lord and Savior.

**(Luke 2:32) a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”**

God declared that Abraham’s descendants were to bless all nations, which included the Gentiles (all who are not Israelites). Even though the Israelites did not shine the light for revelation to all nations, and even though Jews and Gentiles despised one another, God fulfilled His intentions and promises through one of Abraham’s descendants, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus came to bless all peoples and all nations by revealing the truth about God to the Gentiles who did not have the Scriptures, and by bringing glory to Israel because the Savior of the world was from the tribe of Judah.

**(Luke 2:33) And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.**

The more we read and understand the Bible as the Holy Spirit helps us, and the more we learn about our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the more amazed and grateful we feel because we know that we do not deserve the grace of God and our increasing knowledge of God. In a similar way, we can understand how Joseph and Mary felt every time they heard the truth from God’s people and learned more about their son and His Heavenly Father’s expectations of Him.

**(Luke 2:34) Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed**

Simeon blessed both parents and child. The Bible says Mary witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, and through Simeon's prophecy, God prepared her for the rejection of her Son as the Messiah. Joseph is not mentioned during Jesus' public ministry as being alive and involved in Jesus' life, but some people knew about Joseph as Jesus' father (as they supposed). Simeon told Mary that because of her Son some people would fall from prominence or fall further away from God; while others would rise to prominence and rise or draw closer to God as servants of the Messiah. He said that Jesus was a sign from God and as a sign from God Jesus would be opposed by some.

**(Luke 2:35) so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”**

Through the Holy Spirit, God wanted to prepare Joseph and Mary for the difficult future for them and Jesus. Life would not be easy for them because Mary had given birth to the Messiah, the Son of God. Living by faith in their Son the Messiah would lead to difficulties for them in this world. For example, King Herod would want to kill and try to kill the infant Jesus because he wanted to kill the Messiah. Mary would suffer grief, but the Holy Spirit did not reveal how or when she would suffer heartbreak because of Jesus. She would stand at the foot of His cross, and Jesus would entrust her to the care of John (which also indicated that Joseph may have died by that time).

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. If you were God the Father, what type of girl or woman would you want to choose to be the mother of Your only begotten Son?
2. What did the angel say to Mary so she would not be afraid?
3. What type of person was Simeon?
4. What did Simeon say he had seen?
5. What did Simeon say would happen to people who met Jesus?



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