



2 Turtle Doves Family Devotional

The humble turtle doves have Biblical truths to teach us about the Christmas story. The doves appear when Mary and Joseph officially present baby Jesus as their first-born son at the Temple when He is just more than a month old:

“And when the days for the purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ... and to offer a sacrifice according to the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves.” (Luke 2:22)

The choice of the doves as a sacrifice reveals the poverty of Mary and Joseph — Hebrew law required the sacrifice of a lamb at the presentation of a first son, but specifically stated: *“But if she [the mother] cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves” (Leviticus 12:8)*. This is a reminder of the very humble circumstances of Jesus' entry into the world — not as an earthly prince with rich parents, but as the child of a poor teenager in a far-flung corner of the Roman empire.

The presentation of baby Jesus turned into a joyful affair when two elderly sages affirmed the child's destined greatness. First, the Holy Spirit came upon a *“righteous and devout”* man named Simeon who took Jesus in his arms and proclaimed, *“My eyes have seen God's salvation” (Luke 2:30)*. Then an elderly prophetess named Anna came up to Mary and Joseph and their baby and *“began giving thanks to God ... for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38)*. How happy these affirmations must have made Mary and Joseph! After the frightening circumstances leading up to His birth, they must have treasured these declarations that their son was indeed the Son of God.

Finally, as harbingers of peace, the doves remind us of Christ's role in establishing a peaceable kingdom. In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah sends word from God that He will send His Son to be our Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Then at Christ's birth, the angels sing, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!” (Luke 2:14)*.

In days of division, distance, and difficulty, it is wonderful to celebrate at Christmas the joy and peace associated with the birth of our Lord.

