

Anna, A Widow and Prophetess

36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age...Luke 2:36

Last week we learned about Eunice and Lois, Timothy's mother and grandmother, and the influence they had on him. We only have a few more character studies of Women in the Bible before our summer break. This week we will be discussing Anna, a widow and a prophetess in Luke 2:36-38, but we must begin in Luke 2:22 to understand why Anna is important.

Jesus Presented in the Temple

Baby dedications are such a blessing. I am always so blessed to see parents bring their children to present them to the Lord in front of the congregation. It is a beautiful reflection of when Jesus was first presented to the Lord.

In **Luke 2:22-24**, we see when Mary first brought Jesus as a baby to be presented to the Lord.

22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the temple as required by Moses Law to present him to the Lord. The Lord intended for Jesus to be a fulfillment of the Law even as a child, so his earthly parents who were of Jewish descent brought him to the temple to have him circumcised as required in **Leviticus 12:1-5**:

12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. 3 And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. 4 She shall then continue in the blood of her

purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled.

5 ‘But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of her purification sixty-six days.

In addition to the purification ritual that Mary had to follow and the circumcision on the eighth day, a burnt offering also had to be performed. In Leviticus 12: 6-8, we see what expectations were for the burnt offering.

6 ‘When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 7 Then he shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female.

8 ‘And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.’ ”

The expectation was for Mary to bring a burnt offering to the tabernacle so that she could be considered clean. She should have brought a one-year-old lamb and a young pigeon or turtledove to the tabernacle, but she brought a pair of turtledoves or young pigeons as her burnt offering. This indicates that she was unable to bring a lamb as her burnt offering due to financial constraints. However, in the end, she would bring the ultimate lamb sacrifice to the world through the son she was carrying into the tabernacle that day.

Simeon Sees God’s Salvation

When Pastor Charlie, and now Pastor Sean, hold the baby in their arms and pray over the baby, we can almost see Simeon singing his psalm for over the baby Jesus like in **Luke 2:25-28:**

25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,

According to Your word;

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation

31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,

And the glory of Your people Israel."

Simeon is brought into the temple by the Holy Spirit so that he could finally see what the Lord had promised him: Simeon would see "the Consolation of Israel" before he died. Simeon is so excited to see that the Messiah had finally arrived, that he picks up the baby Jesus in his arms and prays a song of praise. Through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, his song announces to those present that Jesus is the savior, that He would bring revelation to the Gentiles, and glory to His people.

Then Simeon turns to Mary and Joseph and prophesies over them:

33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34

Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Mary and Joseph marveled at what Simeon told them. In today's culture, a couple would probably be freaked out if some stranger came up and picked up their baby and prophesied over it. However, the word marveled in the Greek is θαυμάζω (thavmázo) meaning to admire or

wonder. So, they were not necessarily shocked by what Simeon did or prayed over Jesus because they knew who Jesus was but admired in appreciation and respect for Simeon's revelation.

The Holy Spirit through Simeon then prepares Mary for what was to come at the end of Jesus life, "a sword will pierce through your own soul also" referring to the emotional pain she would endure at Christ's crucifixion.

Anna Bears Witness to the Redeemer

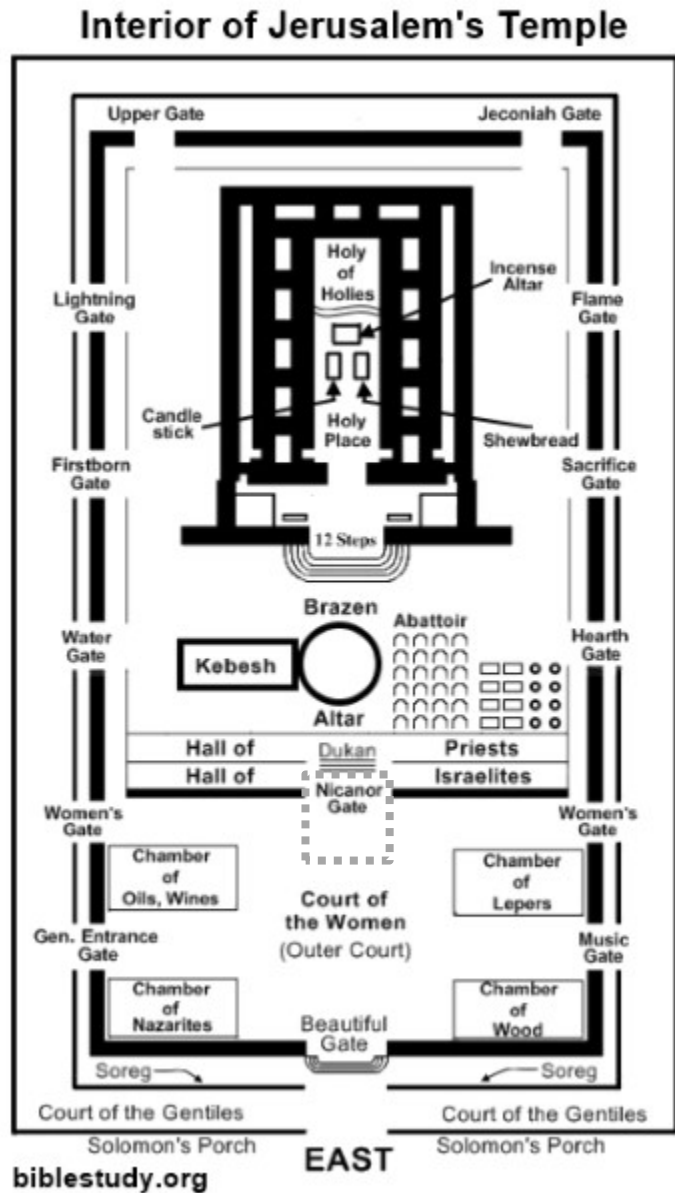
Which brings us to the focus of our study today, Anna, a prophetess:

36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Anna is described as a prophetess. A prophetess could refer to a woman to whom hidden things are revealed, a woman who speaks God's word, or a woman who preaches God's word. The term prophetess is used to describe Miriam, sister to Moses in Exodus 15:20, "Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." Deborah in Judges 4:4-5, "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment." And, Huldah in 2 Chronicles 34:22 "22 So Hilkiyah and those the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke to her to that effect." Whatever the case, it was clear that Anna was dedicated to the Lord and spoke to Him through prayer.

Anna is also described as being of a great age who was once married and became a widow. Although commentaries vary on exactly how long she was married, how long she had been a widow, and how old she was, it is clear that she “did not depart from the temple” indicating that she may have lived in the temple as a widow or close by, so she was often in the temple most likely in the Outer Court also known as the Court of Women because it was the farthest area that a woman could enter the temple. Even though she had lost her husband, she had not lost her faith in God and continued to serve.

She also “served God with fastings and prayers night and day” which indicates that she spent her days in the temple fasting and praying for others. There were many people who came to the temple many different reasons in accordance with the Law of Moses. In addition, there were many people who were physically ill or hurting and needed prayer. Anna was available to pray for these people.



It is in the Lord’s perfect timing that Anna enters the temple and hears Simeon’s proclamation. She gives thanks to the Lord because she understood that the “Consolation of Israel” referred to the birth of the Messiah. Because Anna was often in the temple, she was able to use her availability to not only pray for others, but to spread the good news that the redeemer had been born. What a privilege to be one of the first people to spread the good news of Jesus birth!

Although Simeon was the first to recognize Christ as the Messiah, Anna was able to spread the good news in Jerusalem that the Messiah had been born. It is clear that both of these individuals had a lifetime of praying and seeking to the Lord. Anna made herself available to do the Lord's work daily through prayer and fasting and Simeon was waiting for the Lord to fulfill His promise. Therefore, the Lord was able to use them at the temple at the right time through the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit.

³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Romans 8:3-5.