

Florida Baptist Bruce Ferris writes:- [A study of Anna, the prophetess, as recorded in Luke 2:36-38, is a wonderful way to start the New Year. Although she is part of the Christmas story, the truths she lived out are an inspiration and model for us to follow as we consider the New Year and all the opportunities it holds.](#)

Anna: A Life with only 3 verses in the entire bible written about her. They simply tell us who she was, who she met, and how that transformed her, we don't even have her words. As a woman, she was that insignificant.

While we are told less about what she actually said, we are given more information about her background than Simeon's.

Luke 2:36-38 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, 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 worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Remember that the occasion was for Jesus' presentation in the temple, but nothing is actually said about this ceremony. We have no record here of the ritual, nor are we given the names of any of the priests involved in the ceremony. We are only told of Simeon and Anna, and of the proclamation of these two saints.

Anna is truly a remarkable woman, and really one of the unsung heroes of the nativity story. We always remember the shepherds and the wise men, but both Simeon and Anna saw the Christ child BEFORE the magi, and yet how often are they passed by in the telling of this tale.

PROPHET

The Bible describes her as a prophetess, no small distinction. The O.T. only records 7 prophetesses. placing her alongside Sarah, Miriam, the sister of Moses, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah (wife of Shallum, the keeper of the wardrobe in the time of King Josiah briefly in 2 Kings 22, and 2 Chronicles 34.) and Esther. This was a woman with whom God spoke. She came at a time when there had been no prophets for 100's of years.

Her name means "grace" and she was the daughter of Phanuel whose name means the "face of God" or "vision of God."

Anna was of the tribe or family of Asher. Asher was the eighth son of Jacob and his name means "happy" or "blessed." Because Anna's life represented the truth and grace of God she knew the blessings of God and true happiness even though her outward circumstances may have indicated otherwise.

The women of this tribe were noted for their beauty and talents, consequently they were deemed suitable for royalty and the high priests.

According to J C Ryle Asher was one of the "lost tribes" who were carried into captivity and it is said never returned to Israel in tact after the Assyrian captivity. Some did, for here is a lady, of the tribe of Asher, standing in the court of the temple at the time of Christ's birth. She was one of a remnant that survived and returned from Babylon keeping their genealogies.

Texan Bob Deffinbaugh writes; [As a member of the lost tribe of Asher, there must have been a strong incentive to marry and bear children, since this tribe may have been in danger of extinction. Her greatest womanly contribution, as well as her womanly fulfilment, would seem to have been marriage and child-bearing. Nevertheless, she remained single, lived out her life in the temple, occupied with prayer and fasting.](#)

The Bible says Anna “**was very old**”. Eighty four years young.

Anna was not immune from trials and tribulations. She was married young, widowed early and probably childless. She knew the grief of losing a husband and the pain it brings to the heart. Being a widow in Anna's day was devastating. She would not be able make a livelihood and would be dependent upon God's people or remarriage to survive. She could have succumbed to bitterness. Instead she turned to the Lord to serve him and receive comfort. Anna was another I suggest of 'the quiet of the land', looking for the redemption of His people. One of the faithful remnant in what in her day was a corrupt temple. What trials, desolations and temptations had she known all those years?

Why did Anna succeed under adverse circumstances when so many others did not? How did she become a prominent figure in the Christmas story? We find her in the house of God: waiting for Him. She never fell away or became faithless. She kept trusting and obeying. Anna believed and depended upon God and his promises, such as Malachi 3:1 "**Suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple.**"

PRAYER

Verse 37 says Anna **worshipped night and day, fasting and praying**. Notice the emphasis placed on “fasting and praying” as a significant type of service in the eyes of God. The enemy would have us think it is the least form of service when battles are actually won on our knees. Anna serves as an example because she was continuously seeking, asking, entreating the Lord on behalf of others, a woman who was looking for and hastening the coming of Messiah.

David Moore writes (Milton Baptist Church, Millrise Road, Stoke-on-Trent) Sometimes people get the idea that by fasting they can put a little pressure on God. Nowhere in Scripture does it say, if you fast, you can move God's schedule, or to persuade Him and convince Him to change His will to match yours. Fasting does not involve getting/persuading God to do something against His will. It's not a hunger strike!

Rather fasting is always a matter of preparing oneself to come to God. It enables us to lay other things aside in order to concentrate on Him to give God our full attention. Fasting purposely sets aside time for God and helps us to concentrate on Him.

“What is more important than my necessary food, is my relationship with my Father! I want to hear Him, I want to know Him, I want to know what He is saying to me.”

Biblical prayer harmonises with the will of God, it prays for what God wants... “Thy will be done.” Anna understood that, and that God had promised a Saviour, in part for the consolation of Israel, in part for the conversion of the Gentiles, and they looked for Him, they looked for God to do what His Word said He would. They prayed looking through the telescope of God's Word, they prayed with an eye on the prophecies.

THANKS

Anna had a thankful heart. God granted her eyes to see and ears to hear what Simeon had the joy of touching that day. Amongst all the religious leaders in the Temple; amongst all the scribes and Pharisees, only Anna and Simeon were able to see and touch the Messiah. Anna knew this Christ child was her source of joy and happiness.

Coming up to them at that very moment, when Simeon held and blessed Jesus and his family; **she gave thanks to God.**

This was what she had been praying for, and what she had waited for God to do for so many years. Immediately she worshipped, she was filled with praise and thanksgiving for God's provision of the Saviour.

God's blesses the patient praying of the godly.

WITNESS

Anna witnessed to those around what had been revealed to her. She “**spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem**”. She bore witness to all who would hear that the Saviour had come, probably first to other members of “the quiet of the land”.

CONCLUSION

We see that God had a believing people in the worst of places and in the darkest times. However small the church may be - the gates of hell will never overcome it. Jesus said he is coming again one day How eager are you to see the Messiah “face to face”? - Maranatha people? (Cone O Lord - 1.Cor.16:22c)

David Moore concludes; The great bubble of materialism has finally burst. The god of mammon has fallen. We, like Simeon and Anna, are living in uncertain times, but even in such times there is one certain, unchangeable fact, that God loves us and sent his Son into the world to save us.

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