



September 21, 2020

It is wonderful to see the quality of the men and women surrounding the birth of the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ. The good news that the Messiah was born was not celebrated by all, but it was celebrated by faithful believers who had diligently watched for and anticipated Christ's coming, and whom God singled out to share in the joy of Jesus' birth. One of those believers was the prophetess Anna. Anna faithfully served God for decades, and in her old age she received the blessing of a lifetime when she met the Christ child.

One way to see the quality and faithfulness of this woman of God is to look at her background.

Luke 2:36:

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity.

Here we see several things about Anna. First, she was a prophetess. She was also the daughter of Phanuel, and of the tribe of Asher (or Aser). So Anna was of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. In addition, we see that she was of great age, and that as a young woman she had been married for seven years when her husband died.

Luke 2:37:

And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

By the time of this record in Luke, Anna had been a widow for about eighty-four years. She had served in the Temple for decades, and was probably over one hundred years old at this point.

In the early days of Israel, a widow had many challenges to face. She did not inherit anything from her husband upon his death. She kept only what she brought with her into the marriage. The widow lived a very secluded life, and it was up to her family to support her, especially if she was elderly.

As for Anna, upon her husband's death, she made the decision to serve in the Temple. Luke 2:37 notes that she "departed not from the temple." She did not leave the Temple courts, but instead, "served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day." She truly cared for God's people. In listing Anna's credentials in Luke, God shows how much He regarded her service and character. This is especially true since in that culture, a woman's words were not regarded with as much credibility as a man's and would be more readily accepted if her credentials were given. God, however, acknowledges her by giving these details about her life in His Word, and He also acknowledged her by blessing her in a very special way. God blessed Anna for her faithfulness the day she met Jesus Christ.

Mary and Joseph had brought Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem forty-one days after his birth in order to fulfil two Old Testament laws: presenting Jesus to the Lord and bringing a sin offering and a burnt offering for their new son. It was at this time that they met Anna. God worked in Anna to be in the right place at the right time in order to meet Jesus Christ.

Luke 2:38:

And she [Anna] coming in that instant [as soon as Simeon was finished prophesying] gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Seeing Jesus Christ must have been so thrilling for Anna as one who had been so diligent to serve God. At that time, people had been waiting for the Messiah for generations. It was a tremendous blessing for Anna to see this promise come to pass in her lifetime and an honor for her to be singled out to partake in this good news. God truly acknowledged her for her service. In response, Anna gave thanks to the Lord and then declared the good news to those in Jerusalem who had been waiting for God's redemption, the Messiah. And Anna didn't just talk to one or two people. She told "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." She shared her joy with many. What an occasion this was for her!

For decades Anna had served God, and God did not overlook her faithfulness. She was privileged to be one of the notable people who got to meet the newly born Christ child and learn that at last the Messiah, man's redeemer, had come. She is a great example of someone who was dedicated to faithfully serving God and His people. It is so valuable for us to understand more about and learn from people like Anna, whom God blessed the day she met Jesus Christ.

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