

ANNA THE PROPHETESS LUKE 2:36-38

Luke 2:25-30, the testimony of Simeon. He took the baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God "For my eyes have seen your salvation."

Luke 2:36. Anna, a prophetess, was also there. Inspired women include *Mary*, sister of Aaron and Moses (Exodus 15) was a prophetess. *Deborah* was a prophetess (Judges 4:4, 5, 6, 14). She was a judge (just like Jephthah, Samson, Gideon, etc.). She instructed and judged the people of Israel and gave orders to her general Barak. Another prophetess was named *Huldah*. We learn in 2 Kings 22:11-20 that King Josiah commanded the high priest to consult with her about the book of the Law found in the Temple. Five men came to consult her, and she prophesied God's judgments upon the rebellious people. There were also prophetesses in the church. Acts 2:17; 21:8, 9. 1 Cor. 11:5.

-- **daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher,** -- Eighth son of Jacob (his mother being Zilpah, the maid of Leah (Gen. 30:13)). Some speak of "the lost tribes of the house of Israel." One of those tribes would have been that of Asher, but it was not lost, for here is a very important person from that tribe. The concept of the so-called "lost tribes" is based on the apostasy of the ten tribes that were led by Jeroboam into idolatry when the kingdom was divided.

However, 2 Chron. 11:13-16 says that the faithful of those tribes returned to Jerusalem to continue worshipping the true God. *Anna is a good example of those faithful who departed from the ten tribes that apostatized.* The prophecy of Ezekiel 48:2 refers to the inheritance of Asher in the new (spiritual) temple of "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). See Acts. 26:7.

What the faithful of those ten tribes did is precisely what faithful brothers do today. Seeing that the church of which they are members departs from the truth, they abandon it to join faithful brethren. As in Jeroboam's day, so now there are those who depart from God's law by teaching that churches can centralize their funds in a "sponsoring church" or in some institution (Bible school, children's asylum, clinic, etc.). Others depart from the truth by teaching that when Jesus Christ came into the world He left His divine attributes (or left the use of them) and that in all teaching and activity He acted as a mere man (like the apostles). Many have also turned away from the truth by teaching various errors about marriage, divorce and remarriage (e.g., that the repudiated fornicator can remarry; that those of the world are not subject to Jesus' teachings on marriage and divorce, that Matthew 19:9 belongs to the law of Moses, etc.). And to add insult to injury, some who profess to be faithful, conservative brethren support some aspects of "evolution," teaching that the six days of creation were not consecutive, literal 24-hour days, but long periods of time (that a "day" could have been millions of years).

Luke 2:37 She was a widow of very old age... **and she did not depart from the temple, serving night and day with fasts and prayers.** This emphasizes that she was very faithful, that she was present at every service, both night and day without missing. It's like we would say "She was there all the time," or "every time the doors opened." Sisters more advanced in years can serve God by making supplications for all the saints and for the work of the Lord. Col. 4:12, 13; Efes. 6:18, 19.

Luke 2:38 **And coming in at that instant she gave thanks to God, and spoke of the child to all who awaited redemption in Jerusalem.** Despite her "very old age" she was still very useful to the Lord. She exercised a very important gift. 1 Cor. 14:1-3. According to the texts we have quoted about the prophetesses, they instructed everyone. Deborah *ruled* and instructed the people. Huldah instructed the king and all who were associated with him. So also Anna "spoke of the child to all who awaited redemption in Jerusalem."

How can the elderly sister serve God now? There is much she can do. The first thing is that she have a kind and gentle spirit. She must concentrate on bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). There are older women who apparently only live to complain, murmur and cause misery for themselves and others. They want tons of sympathy and compassion for themselves without expressing compassion for others. This is pure selfishness.

Of course, if they are like that in old age it is because that's how they were when they were younger. An old woman of sweet character did not become sweet simply by turning 80. What we are in old age is the *height* of what we have been for years. Another very important thing is faithful attendance at all church services. Anna "did not depart from the temple." She constantly frequented the temple. Every older sister should be faithful in attending services faithfully.

I remember a 95-year-old sister who was brought to the service every night in a wheelchair. I asked her how she was doing and she said she felt useless. I had to assure her emphatically that her faithful presence at the services was a tremendous example (a sermon).

Older sisters do not have to be at the meeting place every service in order to pray and to hear the word of God. They can read their Bibles. If they can't read or if they struggle to read, they can listen to the word recorded on cassettes. They can also listen to hymns and sermons. Many elderly people fill their days watching television and consuming the garbage of soap operas and worldly talk shows.

The elderly sister can serve the Lord according to her possibilities, visiting the sick, weak brothers in the faith, new members, etc. Or she can use the phone or write letters and postcards. In short, there are many ways to serve. In this way older people are not simply sitting in rocking chairs thinking about life's problems, and wanting someone to visit them to hear their complaints.

It is extremely important to emphasize what Paul says to Titus (2:3-5), "The older women also should be reverent in their behavior; not slanderers, not slaves of wine, masters of good; 4 to teach young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be prudent, chaste, homemakers, good, subject to their husbands, lest the word of God be blasphemed." Just as the work of overseeing the congregation is reserved for men of age and experience, so older sisters have the responsibility to teach young women about their duties as homemakers. Undoubtedly, older sisters can solve many problems in the home of younger women and avoid divorce.

Caleb is a good example. Joshua 6:2 records what he asked for regarding his inheritance in the land of Canaan. "Give me this mountain now." He did not mean "give me" in the sense that others would win it for him, but he asked permission to fight against the giants of the earth to take possession of that mountain (Hebron). **His age? 85 years old.**

Prov. 16:31, "Crown of honor is old age that stands in the way of righteousness."

Wayne Partain, July 6, 2023