



Anna the Prophetess

Written by: A Mighty Arrow
St Mary and Mina Church, Clearwater, FL

One major controversy that often arises when talking about the context of the Holy Bible is its distinction between the genders. The secular world often expresses its confusion in unfounded anger about the inequality it sees between men and women in Holy Scripture. Yet, if they look closely, they will see that the Lord God gives to women the same honor He gives to men.

From the very beginning God did not distinguish between the gifts He gave to men and women. We see in the Old Testament great kings and great queens (the Holy Book of Esther). We read about prophets and prophetesses. We know of judges who were men and of those who were women. (Judges 4-5) We witness great men who were soldiers and also women who took up the sword in the name of Jehovah. There were righteous and wise women (1 Samuel 25) as well as men and there were women who risked their lives for the sake of doing God's will (Joshua 2) just like their male counterparts.

God's Spirit is also evident in the many good works of women in the New Testament. One vivid example is story of the Lord Jesus Christ's circumcision. Here we see that the Lord God looks at the human soul and not the person's gender.

In the Holy Gospel according to St Luke, chapter 2, we are introduced to two incredible people. Both were old, both were righteous, and both prophesized. One of them was Simeon and the other was Anna who is called in Holy Scripture a "prophetess".

The story begins when the parents of the infant Lord Jesus took Him to the temple in Jerusalem to do what is written in the Law of Moses – *"as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord'"* (Luke 2:22). There at the temple was an old man named Simeon.

It was granted to him by God that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. We have all read how Simeon carried the infant Child in his hands and praised God and how he prophesized salvation through the Child.

Holy Scripture also tells us of Anna who was married for only seven years before being widowed. Anna went into the temple while the infant Child was there, she gave thanks to God, and spoke of Him to those seeking redemption in Jerusalem. Clearly the Spirit of God was on her as it was on Simeon that day.

A closer look at the Holy Bible's description of Anna reveals several key points.

First we are immediately aware of her accessibility to the temple.

Anna, like Simeon, was near or at the temple when the Lord Jesus was brought in. Holy Scripture says, *"And coming in at that instant she gave thanks to the Lord"* (Luke 2:38). One would say, 'how fortunate for her that she was at the right place at the right time.' But she really never left the right place. She was never far from the temple. It is only when we are in the temple, in the house of God, that we will see Him. It was not by coincidence that she was there when the Lord Jesus was brought in – it was by choice.

The same choice is given to each one of us, whether we are near the house of the Lord or far from it. It would not be coincidence if we lose our way when



we are far from His House, it will be by choice. Yet if by choice we are near the House of God, we will indeed see the Lord's Anointed One. For where else can a man be found if not in his own house?

The second point is her devotion to the Lord.

Holy Scripture says, *“And this woman was a widow of about eighty four years, who did not depart from the temple but praised God with fasting and prayers day and night”* (Luke 2:37). For almost a century she served the Lord. This is a very long time, especially for us who live in an industrial nation. In America, for example, we are programmed for instant and constant change. The concept of doing the same thing over and over is foreign to us. We often can't cope with monotony. Most of us don't have the patience to watch a TV show without scrolling through the channels during the commercial. For someone to do the same thing for eighty-four years is devotion that today's society can't even comprehend.

How could a person do the same thing in the same place for almost a century? In one word, the answer is love. Anna loved the Lord. She loved to serve Him; she loved to talk to Him. She did not find Him boring, for with God 'everything is made new again'. Anna is telling us something with all her years of service: when you love God, you will find an unending fountain of love that will quench every other desire.

How wonderful if all can be like Anna the prophetess: to find in the Father the fulfillment of all our needs and desires. He becomes to us everything and we are in want of nothing else. Holy Scripture says, *“The full soul loathes the honeycomb; but to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet”* (Proverbs 27:7). When the Lord God fills our souls we will not search for anything. To us even the honeycomb will be sour compared to the sweet taste of God.

David the prophet and king says, *“The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb”* (Psalm 19:10). Yes, God will fulfill in us everything we ever desired if we spend time with Him in His holy places.

Anna's special relationship with God is the third point.

Because of her relationship with God it was revealed to her who the Child really was. Once Phillip asked our Lord Jesus Christ to show him the Father, the Lord Jesus responded, *“I have been so long with you and yet you do not know Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father”* (John 14:9). I believe with Anna the opposite happened. Because she had such a close relationship with God, through the Holy Spirit, she knew who God was. When our Lord Jesus Christ came to the temple she was able



“And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord.” (Luke 2:38).



to recognize Him. Only those who know the Son can know the Father and those who know the Father know the Son.

A fourth point about Anna is that she preached about the Lord, even before He began His ministry.

From the moment she met the Lord Jesus Christ she talked about Him *‘to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem’*. When we meet the Lord Jesus Christ face-to-face we can in no way hold our tongue, but wish to tell the whole world about our Beloved.

Sometimes we are unable to talk about our faith because of pressure society places on religion. We know it would be okay to mention the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in passing, but to talk about our convictions, our deep faith, well that is difficult today. If we do talk about the Lord Jesus Christ we are often labeled ‘religious freaks’. We sometimes have to stand ridicule because of Whom and what we believe in.

However, we can in no way talk about the Lord Jesus Christ or act like His children and become heirs with Him unless there is a strong bond between us; and through Him to the Father. Like Anna we need to feel the Father’s unending love, and experience the Son’s everlasting grace, before we can stand against the tide of negative views displayed by society.

The final point to mention is how God knows us as He knew Anna.

Anna is first introduced to us in Holy Scripture by; *“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher”* (Luke 2:36). This is comforting because it validates that when we know we are God’s children we are assured that He also knows us. He knows our parents all the way to the root of our heritage. He knows us inside and out. Since He knows us so well He takes care of all our needs, those hidden deep inside our hearts and those that are apparent.

Three little verses in the Holy Bible tell us the story of a great woman. It tells of her devotion, her love and her secure place in the Father’s arms. She served long and was rewarded much.

May the Lord grant us the devotion Anna had to serve him, may He grant to us the knowledge of His infinite grace, and may He watch over us that we never stray far from His house that by this we may experience the unending love that comes from the Father’s heart.



Pomegranates were used in the christian art as a symbol of the church (religious community) for the union of its grains within a single fruit.