

Christmas Series 2017

Anna's Testimony

INTRODUCTION

This morning we consider 3 very short but important verses in the story of Christ's birth. I have entitled this account Anna's Testimony. We find her witness in Luke 2:36–38 (ESV):

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

I have but one question to ask of the text: "Why?" Why is this story in our Bibles and why is important to us on Christmas Eve? This is one of the most important questions we can ask of our Scriptures. If the Holy Spirit had chosen not to include this what would we lose? Our Bible is one book. But it is also 66 books. Our Bible is inspired in its totality by God, the Holy Spirit. Yet many authors were used over many years. Yet the Bible is one cohesive, unified Book. To remove and disregard any one part is to cause the whole fabric to fall apart. So why did God include Anna's testimony?

To answer that question, I can discern 5 reasons why this story is in our Bibles. Let's look at them together.

WHY DO WE HAVE THE TESTIMONY OF ANNA?

#1. Anna corroborated the prophecy of Simeon.

Last Sunday Pastor Josh expounded for us the prophecy of Simeon. Simeon, as influenced by the Holy Spirit revealed to us Solus Christus – Christ alone. Jesus Christ is God's salvation for all people: Jews and Gentiles. Josh pointed out that the key words from Simeon were these: "for my eyes have seen your salvation."¹

Now in our text we see that Anna 'just happened' to come by as Simeon was prophesying. I say that with tongue-in-cheek, of course. "And coming up at that very hour"² emphasizes the providence of God that she be there at that right time. Why? Well listen to what the Bible says,

- *"A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established."*
(Deuteronomy 19:15, ESV)

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 2:30). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 2:38). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

- *“Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.” (1 Thessalonians 5:19–22, ESV)*
- *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” (1 John 4:1–3, ESV)*

As Josh pointed out, Simeon was not a prophet, nor did he hold any office that we know of. He was a “righteous and devout”³ man. For his prophecy to have legitimacy it had to be confirmed. Anna did that.

#2. The widow Anna balanced the testimony of the righteous Simeon

One of the things we learn about the author, Luke, was his desire to show the value of those people who were looked down upon in that culture. He showed God’s heart for the poor and disadvantage. Also, in his Gospel, Luke is obviously trying to portray women as equal to men in dignity before God, shown by the paralleling of events involving men and women. He intends to show, like no other Biblical author that men and women have equal dignity before God. As he writes through this Gospel is balances the role of men and women. For example, in the birth narrative:

MEN	WOMEN
Angel’s message to Zechariah (1:8-23)	Angel’s message to Mary (1:26-38).
Mary’s Song of Praise (1:46-55)	Zechariah’s Song of Praise (1:68-79).
Simeon praising God for seeing the baby Jesus (2:25-35),	Anna praising God (2:36-38).

We could show you that this is Luke’s pattern throughout the Gospel. So, this is the 2nd reason I believe Anna’s story is important: It honors women. In a culture and society that denigrated women, the Holy Spirit provokes Luke to show God’s honor and value of both genders.

#3. He located the witness in the most holy place in Israel

Anna’s testimony is verified in the most holy place in Israel, the Temple, giving validity to it. The Temple was always symbolic to the Jew – the place where God’s presence would occupy. The Temple was God’s place of delight. The temple was the religious, cultural, and national center. The Temple was the place of revelation – where God spoke.



No single place in all the world was holier to Jews and Christians at the time of Jesus than the Temple Mount. It was known as *Har Habayit*, the “Mountain of the House [of God].” On this sacred parcel of

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 2:25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ground, the God of all creation spoke with his prophets and priests, and on it a temple had been built to which He could come and in which his glory could dwell.

The events of Simeon and Anna took place at the Court of Women. It's not that this was a place *only* for women, but it was the farthest point that women could go toward the Temple. But nonetheless what we hear occurred in the holiest place in Israel. This was holy ground.

It is massively important that the testimony of these two witnesses be heard in the site that represented God's holy presence.

#4. Anna was a Credible Witness par Excellence

Fourthly not only does Anna give credence to the words of Simeon in the place of God's presence, she herself is a credible witness. Like Simeon she is a person of character. Her heritage from the tribe of Asher. When the northern kingdom rebelled against God and prior to them taken captive, some men from Asher came to Judah (*"However, some men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem."*¹² *The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the Lord."*¹⁴) Anna's heritage is probably from this faithful remnant that remained true to God.

The point is that Anna is solidly within the heritage of Israel and solidly a credible Jewish witness.

Also, she models the rigid Jewish ideal of marrying once and devoting herself only to God in her widowhood. Even at 84+ she dedicated herself to worship of God, night and day. Of course this cultural expectation isn't held today as it was, but when we understand the culture Anna lived in we see that all her family, neighbors and friends would have looked to her with incredible admiration and held her in the highest of esteem.

Lastly,

#5. Together with all he wrote He wanted to convince a non-Jew that Jesus was the Savior for all men.

Writing to a man named Theophilus, Luke says that his intention is ^{3b}to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."⁵

Anna spoke of Jesus to all who would hear that he was the "redemption of Jerusalem". That term (iaw Isa 52:7-10) is synonymous with Simeon's term: the Comforter/consolation of Israel. The Old Testament taught that the Consolation of Israel or the Redemption of Jerusalem would be accomplished through God's representative: The Messiah. Anna affirmed Simeon's prophecy by confirming that this was the Messiah. Therefore, as Josh taught: Salvation is *sola Christus*.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (2 Ch 30:11–12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 1:3–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Jesus is the bridge between the Old Covenant and the New. To see Jesus is to see the glory of Israel who is also the light for the Gentiles. In other words, as Simeon said Jesus is salvation to all peoples. Luke, for the reasons given adds the testimony of Anna to support that.

SUMMARY

Why do we have the testimony of Anna? The Biblical Gospel is on trial. The jury is a man named Theophilus. Is it true that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles? The first witness is the godly man Simeon. But Simeon's testimony needs support. God brings into the Court, a godly, credible witness in the form of a woman who provides unreserved affirmation to the truth: Jesus is the Savior of the world.

APPLICATION

Luke had a mission. I wonder if he has succeeded? I wonder if you are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of all men and the fulfillment of all the promises of God given to faithful Israel in the Old Testament? Do you believe that? If you do, what does believing that look like?

When we consider both Simeon and Anna, we get a picture of what a life looks like that truly believes that Jesus is the Christ. For Simeon, once he saw Jesus, he could say, *"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word"* (Luke 2:29, ESV). Translation? Now that I've seen Jesus, everything else is pale compared to that. For Anna, once she saw Jesus we read, *"... she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem"* (Luke 2:38, ESV). Her life of fasting and prayer turned into a life of praise and proclamation.

The Lordship of Christ should cause "the things of this earth to grow strangely dim". The Lordship of Christ should motivate us toward "fruitful labor."⁶ Paul summarized that in his letter to the Christians in Philippi: *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better."* (Philippians 1:21–23, ESV).

Let us pray.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Php 1:22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.