



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #019

Anna Confirms That Jesus is the Messiah LK 2.36-38

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36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She had become old, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage 37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never departed from the temple but continued ministering to God night and day, by fasting and praying.

38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she was offering up praise and thanks to God and continued speaking about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus.*

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The Temple in Jerusalem
Time	8 Days After Jesus was Born
Stage of Jesus' Life	Stage II: His 30 Years of Preparation for Ministry
Chapter 3	The Birth of Jesus
Section #019	Anna Confirms that Jesus is the Messiah

Today's reading reminds us of one of the unique features of Luke's gospel, and his composite presentation of Jesus. As a Gentile, Luke was particularly sensitive to our Lord's impartial, unconditional love for all people, not just the descendants of Abraham. We see this in the way he took Jesus' genealogy all the way back to Adam, making every person in history directly related to Jesus. This is in contrast to the way Matthew, a Jew writing primarily for Jews, stopped his genealogy at Abraham, and thus made Jesus kin to all Jews, but not all people in the world.

The unconditional love and grace of Jesus was further emphasized by Luke in the way he shows us Jesus' passion to minister to and fellowship with the most rejected and reviled segment of society--the poor and down-and-out. From afflicted lepers who were barred from contact with other people, to Zaccheus the vilified tax-collector, Jesus reached out to the most disenfranchised fringes of society. Luke illustrates this aspect of Jesus' life and values by the way he included women in his ministry.

In the first 18 DJN readings, we have already seen how Luke included Mary and Elizabeth to balance the roles of Zechariah and Joseph. Now we find Anna in a key role as a confirming witness to the Messiah, following Simeon. Luke's inclusion of an equal number of women to men in his narrative was thoroughly counter-cultural in a document like his gospel, which was intended to be an official biography of the greatest Person who ever lived. In the 1st century that meant a document written by men, for men, and confirmed by the testimony of men.

Luke gave women a prominent place in his gospel because Jesus so obviously ignored the prejudices and injustices that were routine in his culture, and treated women the same way as men. Luke was deeply impressed by Jesus in this, therefore he called attention to it in his gospel. After all, gender discrimination and iterally is the most basic form of discrimination possible. It pits half of the human race against the other half, involving everyone in the process.

We take the equality of all people for granted today, but it was an indescribably radical part of Jesus' life-style in the first century. Unconditional love is always counter-cultural. What is true of Jesus ought to be true of all of his followers, too.

Today's brief description of Anna's prophetic confirmation of the infant Jesus as the Messiah concludes Luke's presentation of the events surrounding the birth of the Son of God. It is striking to note that Luke began and ended his birth-narrative with prayer.

It all started with Zechariah's priestly ministry in prayer in the Temple, and it ended back at the same temple, with the intercessory ministry of Anna, who lived in the Temple offering non-stop prayer and fasting to her God. Zechariah was probably limited to just one opportunity in his lifetime to enter into the Holy Place and offer incense and prayer there as a priestly representative of the people. Anna, on the other hand, had never stopped offering her prayers and praise to God over a 60 year period. She was one of the greatest prayer warriors and worshippers of all time. What an example of the kind of prayer life that Jesus came to open up to us all—teaching us to live constantly in the presence of God.

God uses prayerful people to do His greatest, eternal work. There is no question about that. Prayer prepared the birth and life of Jesus.

Ever since the first promise of a Savior given to Eve, God's people had prayed for his Salvation to come. Only God knows how much prayer regarding the Messiah was offered in the many years from Eve to Anna. Every prayer was answered in a way that was exceedingly, abundantly beyond the cumulative total of all the prayers ever offered. Anna was a fitting final witness in Luke's gospel to the human birth of the God who hears the prayers of his people, before we even ask.

The narrative will turn next to the witness of Matthew, who will continue to offer confirming testimony that Jesus was and IS "the LORD who Saves," in his conception, birth, and every aspect of his sinless, perfect life.

APPLICATION:

We have noted that regular times of prayer were observed every day in the Temple. Zechariah, Anna and a host of other people exercised discipline in praying at the established times. Consistency in prayer requires discipline. There is no other way around it. If you do not have an established, committed time for private, and corporate prayer, it will not happen consistently.

What is your daily prayer time? If you have not made a daily appointment to be alone with the Trinity in private prayer and worship, would you make that commitment now?

When will you pray every day? Who will be your accountability person regarding this?