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An Elderly Widow (Anna)

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THE PHYSICAL BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST AN ELDERLY WIDOW (ANNA)

THE ANNA FILE

STATISTICS ON HER LIFE

Father: Phanuel (Luke 2:36)

First mention: Luke 2:36

Final mention: Luke 2:36

Meaning of her name: "Grace"

Frequency of her name: Referred to one time

Important fact about her life: She gave thanks to God at the dedication of the infant Jesus.

STORY OF HER LIFE

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Lk. 2:36-38).

- Anna is the second of only two women in the scriptures whose age is revealed. Sarah was the first. She was 127. See Gen. 23:1.
- She had also spent longer being a widow than any other recorded woman.
- Perhaps Paul would later have her in mind when he admonished the local church in Thessalonica to "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. 5:17).
- Anna certainly would have been more than qualified to be cared for by any later local church. Note Paul's counsel to Timothy:

"Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day" (1 Tim. 5:3-5).

- She is one of nine prophetesses referred to in the Bible. These are:
 - A. Miriam (Exod. 15:20)
 - B. Deborah (Judg. 4:4-9)
 - C. Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3)

D. Huldah (2 Chron. 34:22-28)

E. Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:8, 9)

REFLECTIONS FROM HER LIFE

I still often think of him. What a wonderful husband! What a happy marriage we had! But his untimely death ended it seven short years later. Where has the time gone? That was decades ago. I am now eighty-four. Recently my rabbi offered encouragement by reminding me that one of our Hebrew heroes Caleb was eighty-five and still going strong for God.

"Anna," he said, "listen to Caleb's testimony as given to Joshua on his eighty-fifth birthday":

"So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.' And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said" (Josh. 14:9-12).

Well, while those words were of great comfort it caused me to wonder just what kind of mountain mission has God given me. Wait, someone has just entered the temple area. Yes, I see it is Simeon. He comes by almost daily. We certainly know what his mountain is – to see the promised Messiah before he dies. Simeon is so faithful in helping parents dedicate their children to the Lord. It seems several families are already waiting to have this done. Finally the last couple stands before him. I understand they are from Bethlehem and have brought their forty-day old son for dedication.

Suddenly the scene seems to explode with excitement! Simeon is literally beside himself! This soft-spoken man is crying out with unsurpassed joy . . . "This Baby Boy is the One! Glory to God in the highest! I have lived to see your promised Messiah, the Consolation of Israel!"

Well, that's all I needed to hear! I remember praying, dear God, you have just given me my mountain mission. I'll spend the remaining days of my life, speaking about this Messiah, to all those who look for redemption in Israel!