

Anna – Living with Hope in God

Luke 2:21-40

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Living life day-to-day can sometimes become wearisome and even quite discouraging. Family members or friends may find themselves in difficult positions in their jobs, fears of the future, disagreements with each other, or debilitating health issues. We pray for each other, we encourage them, ask God for guidance, and yet it seems like nothing changes. At times, we almost lose hope. When we find ourselves in those places, it's time to look at the prophetess Anna. She is an example of living her daily life with absolute trust and hope in her God as well as praying for others.

1. Joseph and Mary presented Jesus at the Temple soon after he was born. As a male born into a Jewish family, there were three ceremonies for the parents to complete.

a. Circumcision: performed on the 8th day for all male children, chosen by God.

Why was the family to complete this ceremony? **Genesis 17:9-14**

How would Jewish families today describe this ceremony?

b. Consecration of the firstborn son, who belongs to the Lord, and then redeemed back with a small token.

Describe this ceremony as explained in the following texts:

Exodus 13:2, 12, & Numbers 18:14-16

What are some ways that this ceremony would affirm and encourage a parent's role when raising this child?

c. Purification from childbirth for Mary, 40 days after a son's birth: **Leviticus 12:1-8**

The book, *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant, is a biographical fictional novel of Biblical times, describing the lives Leah and Rachel, the two wives of Jacob, and Dinah, Leah's daughter, found in **Genesis 29:14b–30:1-21**. The supportive community of women is created because of the purification laws. **Leviticus 15:19-30**

What are ways that women in your family are supported?

Why is this kind of support so important for young girls and women today?

2. The family then meets two elderly (Senior Citizens!) folks in the Temple, Simeon and Anna.

Luke 2:36-38

a. Describe Anna's physical appearance and her social position.

b. Tribe and religious role: ***Anna was an Israelite, of the tribe of Asher, one of the ten “lost tribes” of Israel, which were scattered in the Assyrian captivity. She was also a female prophet.***

c. How does the text describe Anna's spiritual life?

d. Prophetess/female prophet

Definition: ***spokesperson for God (list of OT prophets) and women prophets:***

Exodus 15:20

Judges 4:4

2 Kings 22:14

Nehemiah 6:14

Acts 21:9 (Acts 6:5)

e. Anna's prayers were said each day. What were her petitions? Why do you think she prayed them? **Joel 2:1-2a, 12-14a**

f. How do you think the male Temple officials viewed these old folks?

3. Intercessory Prayer and Worship

a. What do you think these activities looked like to the people in Anna's time?

b. Is anyone too old to be a servant for Christ?

c. Anna lived with HOPE and practiced that HOPE!

In the Presence: She never left the Temple (Luke 2:37)

Worshiped, prayed, fasted: (Luke 2:37)

Full of Thanksgiving: (Luke 2:38)

Full of Evangelism: (Luke 2:38)

d. ***The Nunc Dimittis*** - Canticle of Simeon

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

KJV

4. It will be helpful to think about Anna and the time frame she lived to help us understand her presence in the Luke story.

The views of women at this time in Israel's history:

they held a vulnerable status within society,

they were fringes of first-century society,

but as an older woman, she would be respected.

a. A woman's relationship with her father and husband: **completely dependent. She had no status without a relationship with a male relative.**

b. Any status in the courts of law or able to receive an inheritance? **No**

c. Education for a female: **only happened in the home environment.**

d. Divorce? **If a husband didn't want the woman as his wife anymore, his word would break the marriage.**

e. If a woman's husband dies: **she's lost all social status and can only recover if she marries her husband's brother.**

Females, according to Jewish tradition, were only allowed in a raised gallery along three sides of the Temple court. They were allowed to observe the ceremonies but never to participate in them.

Rabbinic literature was filled with contempt for women. The rabbis taught that women were not to be saluted, or spoken to in the street, and they were not to be instructed in the law or receive an inheritance. A woman walked six paces behind her husband and if she uncovered her hair in a public place she was considered a harlot.

In ancient Israel the Jewish culture was one of the most male dominant cultures in the whole world. In ancient Judaism the woman only had rights in the home and even that was very limited. The man had authority over his wife and daughters, establishing their activities and their relationships. Women were passed from the control of her father to the control of her husband, with little or no say in the matter. They were sold for a dowry settlement usually when they came of age. The Mishnah taught that a woman was like a gentile slave who could be obtained by intercourse, money or writ (m. Qidd 1:1).

Women could not play a significant role in the synagogue because they were levitically unclean for several days every month during their menstrual cycle. Women were not even counted as members in a

synagogue count. They did not recite the daily Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-8), they did not read the Torah in the synagogue (Ber 3:3), they were not required to come to any feasts or festivals, and the Mishnah says:

"The observance of all the positive ordinances that depend on the time of year is incumbent on men but not on women..."

Women were only allowed to receive very little education on religion and the main religious instruction in the home was given by the man and not the woman. They could not be disciples of any great rabbi, they certainly could not travel with any rabbi.

In court a woman's testimony was considered suspect (m. Ned. 11:10). Women also did not have the right to divorce.

The Ancient Hebrew law code outlined in the Bible unfortunately lacks the detail that can be found in other ancient legal systems such as the Babylonian and Roman, but we can at least summarize the general principles.

1. Marriage was called "taking a wife"

2. It involved sexual intercourse

3. While there was no death penalty in Hebrew law for property crimes, adultery was a capital offence for both participants.

4. Marriage and children were necessary to have a fulfilled life. A childless woman could call herself a mother by giving her maid-servant to her husband as a second wife (assuming, of course, the maid-servant did indeed produce a child).

5. A widow had the right to marry her husband's brother if he lived in the same town.

6. Polygamy was permitted but uncommon.

7. Divorce was easy for a man and impossible for a woman.

8. Childlessness was the most common reason for divorce

9. The woman moved to the husband's home and family

10. While the husband was clearly the boss, each expected love from the other.

<http://www.bible-history.com/court-of-women/women.html>