



## No.21 - Anna - patience is a virtue!

**Luke 2:22-27; Luke 2:36-38**

Anna was a truly amazing woman whose happiness had been cut short at the death of her husband, after seven years of marriage. Normally at this time the tradition was that she would return to the house of her parents as she was obviously childless and broken-hearted. Maybe there would be another husband from a brother-in-law. Obviously there was no one forthcoming as we find her as a prophetess in the Temple ministering to the Lord. She had been a widow for over sixty years and having the honour of being a prophetess was a rare job for a woman, as she spoke

the Word of God to the people. Like Mary she had 'chosen what is better and it was not taken away from her' **Luke 10:42**.

She determined at the end of a very special relationship with her husband to keep going and focus on God using worship as a tool to heal her. She did not wallow in self-pity or depression, wanting to stay at home and not reach out to others. She didn't become a burden to her relatives or friends, or constantly harping back to the past. She had a strong faith in God that what Satan had meant for harm God was going to turn and use for His glory but also for her own good. Anna fled to God. She dedicated her whole life to serving and worshiping God with prayer, fasting and witnessing and giving prophecy in the Temple. Her whole focus was on what He wanted more than her own personal needs. Her whole life was death to herself and ministering to the Lord day and night.

### **Ministering to the Lord**

We are all created to give ourselves to God, **Isaiah 43:7-21** and He gives Himself to us. We can do this by praising; worshipping and having communion with Him; giving of our time and finances. Anna gave sixty odd years ministering to God 'with fasting and prayer night and day' and God moved, sending the Messiah the 'Saviour' of the world. What would happen if we gave ourselves, would there be a mighty revival or even Jesus coming again to meet His faithful children in the air? There is a lot mentioned in the Word about 'ministering to the Lord' **Deuteronomy 10:8; 1Samuel 3:1; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; Luke 1:46-55**.

We are saved firstly because He wants us for Himself, He wants a total love relationship, including close fellowship with us but too often we feel we have to repay God for all His goodness to us so our focus is on our 'doing'. We can never do anything 'for' God. God has chosen us to be involved in what He is doing not us doing what we think is a good idea. This all starts in ministering to the Lord.

Everyone worships something or somebody, we were created for this, but how much do we value worshipping God. Worshipping anything or anybody else is idolatry. In order to find out what or who we worship, think about what or who do we think about **most** and that is the answer. Follow our thoughts to the end of the trail and on that throne is what or who we worship!! Is it ourselves, money, family, etc?

Like Anna we need to choose that, 'I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing' as King David said **2 Samuel 24:24**. As Paul suggests in **Romans 12:1-2**, we need to offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. This means when God is calling us to spend time with Him but we know our friends are going to the shops, having coffee, seeing a film etc: we choose to obey God's call putting aside our own agenda **1 Timothy 2:1-3**

Real worship is when Jesus is at the centre of our lives and we exist just to worship Him not ourselves or comfort. Abraham had his heart set on God when offering his son Isaac so then God provided a sacrifice (**Genesis 22:5**) People who have laid themselves down so that all they do is an act of worship to God, find amazing things happen.

### **How do we minister to the Lord?**

Simply the answer is we minister with **1)** all our heart **2)** with all our soul and **3)** with all our strength.

**1)** Heart offering is something that God does in us if we ask Him. He takes out our hearts of stone and gives us a heart of love and obedience (**Ezekiel 36:25-27**) We just have to ask 'create in me a pure heart

O God and renew a right, persevering, and steadfast spirit within me' **Psalm 51:10** God created us uniquely at the beginning so He certainly knows how to sort any changes we have caused by our past, bitterness, anger, or unforgiveness etc. Also pray 'let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my (firm, impenetrable) Rock and my Redeemer' **Psalm 19:14AMP**.

We love Him because He first loved us so God knows how to draw us by His grace and mercy. He knows where we are and at times draws really close and at other times we feel He is nowhere near, He seems to hide Himself from us. That is when we have to keep going by faith and hold onto God whatever we feel like, as it never changes the Truth that 'God Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let you down relax My hold on you! Assuredly not!' **Hebrews 13:5 AMP** Speak this out loud and let it burn into your spirit until you have faith and believe (trust in, cling to and rely on) what God has said. We cannot help but love someone who shows us such amazing love and mercy. When we see this love all fear will go! **1 John 4:18**

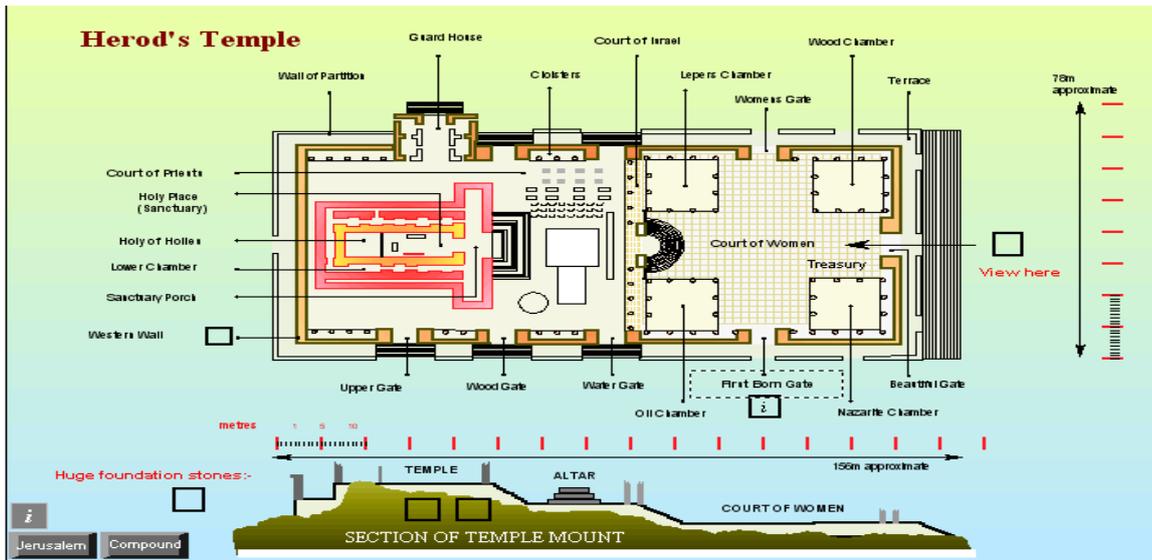
**2)** The soul is a collective word for our mind, our will and our emotions. Ministering to the Lord has to start with tackling our stinking thinking. We need to 'take every thought captive to Jesus Christ', **2 Corinthians 10:5** because 'as a man thinks in his heart, so is he', **Proverbs 23:7**. God wants us to be in agreement with Him and see things from His perspective. Then we are in a position to serve His and not our own purposes, or emotions. We must learn to worship the Lord and wait in His presence until He commands us to move, not when we feel like it!

We can be kept from God's best by our busyness. This is presumption as we have not surrendered our will to God's Almighty control but we are full of what we think are good ideas. Our work for or with the church family must flow from our ministry to God first, then it will be eternally effective. Our carnal soul urges us to 'do' but the Spirit leads us to 'be' by abiding and waiting on Him. As we walk in the Spirit we cannot fulfil the lust of the flesh. This is best described in **Ephesians 5:16-21 AMP** "Making the very most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is; And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but ever be filled and stimulated with the Holy Spirit. Speak out to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, offering praise with voices and making melody with all your heart to the Lord; At all times and **for everything** giving thanks in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One." What a picture of real Christian life the way God plans.

**3)** All your strength means what it says, simply putting all your effort into your relationship with the living God. Everyday asking God what He wants done in and through you and then obey, choose right. Mary of Bethany is a great example of this when Jesus told the very fussy busy Martha that her sister Mary 'had chosen the better part' sitting at His feet

At the time of Jesus' birth when Anna was ministering to the Lord the whole country was in depression and oppression and desperately in need of a Saviour and Redeemer. Having seen the Christ, the Saviour, she has to tell everyone. She knew everyone in Jerusalem was looking for a redeemer and hoping and expecting Him in their lifetime. God did not let her down and rewarded her faithfulness by making sure she was in the right place at the right time. Together with Simeon she was allowed to see the Child and worship Him.

This would be the Temple as Anna and Simeon knew it in their day, although they will have worshipped in different parts of the Temple as she was a woman. This just shows that where ever we are we can thank our wonderful Saviour, Jesus, and worship our Father, in Spirit and in Truth, **John 4:24** whether we are in a religious building full of tradition and ritual or we are in the open air on the top of a mountain. We should pray without ceasing so that means we pray, praise and worship everywhere, **1 Thessalonians 5:17**.



## **Brokenness**

Brokenness is not easy to define but can be clearly seen in the reactions of Jesus, especially as He approached the Cross and in His crucifixion. It may be applied personally in this way:

When to do the will of God means that even my Christian family will not understand, and I remember that "Neither did His brothers believe in Him" (**John 7:5**), and I bow my head to obey and accept the misunderstanding. **This is brokenness.**

When I am misrepresented or deliberately misinterpreted, and I remember that Jesus was falsely accused but He "held His peace," and I bow my head to accept the accusation without trying to justify myself. **This is brokenness.**

When another is preferred before me and I am deliberately passed over, I remember that they cried, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas", (**Luke 23:18**) and I bow my head and accept rejection. **This is brokenness.**

When my plans are brushed aside, and I see the work of years brought to ruins by the ambitions of others, I remember that Jesus allowed them to lead Him away to crucify Him (**Matthew 27:31**) and He accepted that place of failure, I bow my head and accept the injustice without bitterness. **This is brokenness.**

When, in order to be right with my God it is necessary to take the humbling path of confession and restitution, I remember that Jesus "made Himself of no reputation" and "humbled Himself...unto death, even the death of the cross" (**Philippians 2:8**), I bow my head and am ready to accept the shame of exposure. **This is brokenness.**

When others take unfair advantage of my being a Christian and treat my belongings as public property, I remember "they stripped Him.....and parted His garments, casting lots" (**Matthew 27:28-34**) and I bow my head and accept "joyfully the spoiling of my goods" for His sake. **This is brokenness.**

When one acts toward me in an unforgivable way, I remember that when He was crucified, Jesus prayed "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do" (**Luke 23:34**), and I bow my head and accept any behaviour towards me as forgiven by my loving Father. **This is brokenness.**

When people expect the impossible of me and more than time or human strength can give, I remember that Jesus said, "This is my body which is given for you..." (**Luke 22:19**), and I repent of my self-indulgence and lack of self-giving to others. **This is brokenness.**

## No.21 - Anna - patience is a virtue! Challenges Questions

### **Read the beginning of the notes about Anna.**

1. What do you feel about the loss of young Anna's husband and her willingness to give her life to service in the Temple?
2. What amazing privilege did Anna have? What was her reaction and how long had she waited for this day? Who did she share this experience with, **Luke 2:38**?

### **Read the rest of the notes about 'Ministering to the Lord'**

3. What do you think 'ministering to the Lord' is all about? Do you think it should be a priority in a Christian's life? Is it important to you?
4. How do we go about 'ministering to the Lord'? Is there any area that you feel God wants your attention?
5. Out of the points about '**Brokenness**' is there any point that you know you have experienced and identifying with Jesus has made it easier? Are there any situations you are going through at present where one of the points shows you how Jesus would respond?

### **Read Luke 10:38-42 and John 12:1-10 about Mary of Bethany**

6. Who was Mary related to? What kind of personality do you think Mary is? Can you identify with her?
7. What choice did she make when Jesus visited the house in **Luke 10:38-42**? What alternatives did she have?
8. What did Jesus say about Mary's choice? **Luke 10:42**

9. Why would this be Jesus' last visit described in **John 12:1-10** to His Bethany family? Do you think they recognised this?
  
10. What did Mary do for Jesus? How much did it cost her? What was the physical result?
  
11. Who objected strongly to her actions? Why?
  
12. How did Mary cope again with her actions and motives being misunderstood?
  
13. Can you relate to this in your life in any way?
  
14. How did Jesus defend her? What does Jesus say about her? Could He say the same about you?
  
15. How can we sit at the feet of Jesus today and give our most valuable possession?
  
16. Has anything spoken to you in this whole study?