

Widows in Luke's Gospel

Anna – Speaking (1)

Reading: Luke 2 v 13 – 20, 25 - 40

Over this chapter in Luke's gospel we could write 1 John 1 v 3 "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you*". In the chapter we not only find Anna speaking v 38 "*spake of him*", but also the shepherds and Simeon.

v 15 – 20 **Shepherds** - "*made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.*"

v 25 – 35 **Simeon** - " *marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.*"

v 36 – 38 **Anna** - "*spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*"

Before we come to the shepherds notice how the angels (v 13, 14) also spoke or sang because of the child born. The message was given concerning "*a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*" and suddenly a multitude of angels praising God. The order of what they said is important, firstly "*Glory to God*" and then "*goodwill toward men.*"

v 15 – 20 Shepherds:

The night recorded in Luke 2 was a night they would never forget: it was the night they found the Saviour. It was a night of wonder and joy v20 "*And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God*". Is this true for us? Are we still filled with wonder and joy when we remember the day we met the Saviour? The shepherds praised God v20 "*for all the things they had heard and seen*". What had they heard? They had heard the message of the angel; a Saviour is born. What a message and what a change it brought to shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem. They came with haste to Bethlehem and what did they see? They saw, as the angel had said, "*the babe lying in a manger.*" What a scene, the Saviour, Christ the Lord, God manifest in flesh "*wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*" When they heard and when they saw, then they spoke v17 "*concerning this child.*" They spoke from experience and they spoke of "*this child*" - "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you*".

The shepherds were ordinary men, with an extraordinary story (compare Acts 2 v 1 – 13) and as they spoke v18 "*all they that heard it wondered*". They wondered, they marvelled, at what they heard concerning this child. As others wondered v19 "*Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*" (compare v51). Do we read our bible like this – treasuring the words in our heart, comparing scripture with scripture as we seek to understand God's will.

v 25 – 35 Simeon:

Some 40 days after the shepherds had seen "*the babe lying in a manger*" and spoke "*concerning this child*" Mary and Joseph took him to the temple in Jerusalem. This was in accordance with the law – see Lev 12. In Jerusalem there was a godly – "*just and devout*" – man called Simeon. He was waiting for the coming Messiah and "*the Holy Ghost was upon him.*" Despite the conditions of the day, Simeon was one of the godly remnant – Mal 3 v 16 "*they that feared the Lord spake often one to another*". As the shepherds had been told of the birth of Christ, the Lord, so it had been revealed unto Simeon that he would see "*the Lord's Christ*". Is this not like you and me? Should this not be like you and me? Part of a small godly remnant in an evil world, guided by the Holy Spirit and waiting for the coming of the Lord.

Led by the Holy Spirit Simeon comes to the temple and v28 *"Then took he him up in his arms"*. Simeon held in his arms the mighty creator 1 John 1 v 1 *"our hands have handled, of the Word of life"*. (At the end of the gospel we read of another just man, Joseph of Arimathaea. Luke records concerning the body of the Lord Jesus, *"he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre"*.) The anticipation of Simeon's life had been realised, v30 *"mine eyes have seen thy salvation"*. Like the shepherds, when Simeon saw he spoke. He spoke firstly to God v29 – 32, and he spoke to God about his Son: v30 *"thy salvation"*, v31 *"which thou hast prepared"*, v32 *"a light"* and *"the glory of thy people"*. Simeon understood about the Messiah and his first response was, like the angels, to give glory to God.

At v33 *"Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him."* They 'marvelled', same word as translated 'wondered' in v18. It is little wonder that they marvelled, for Simeon's subject was the uniqueness of the babe.

In v34, 35 Simeon speaks to Mary, but his subject remains *"this child"*. Simeon, like the shepherds, was taken up with 'this child'. However, even as they rejoiced and praised God for a child born Simeon tells of what is to come, the reason why the babe is come v34 *"set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against"*.

v36 – 38 Anna:

v36 and 37 give a short history of the life of Anna. As Simeon an elderly man, waited for the coming Messiah, so Anna an elderly lady *"looked for redemption in Jerusalem."*

- 1) She was a prophetess – for almost 400 years, as far as the scripture record reveals, God had been silent, and there had been no prophet since Malachi. Prophetesses were rare in Israel, only 4 named in the OT and one other who is not named. Now, as the Christ is born, a prophetess comes to the temple, one through whom the word of God would come and *"she spake of him"*.
- 2) She could trace her ancestry to the tribe of Asher. Seven hundred years after the defeat of Israel and the nation was taken captive to Assyria, Anna is known as a daughter of Asher. She is the only notable person from the tribe of Asher recorded in the bible.
- 3) She was a widow – as a young woman she had known sorrow. Only seven years of married life and then her husband had died.
- 4) She was a great age v37 *"she was a widow of about fourscore and four years"*. Here was an elderly widow who had faithfully served God for many years. Anna was what Paul would describe as 'a widow indeed' 1 Tim 5 v 5 *"Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day."*
- 5) She served God continually. What could an old woman do? v37 *"she served God with fastings and prayers night and day."* Like Mary of Bethany in Mark 14 *"she hath done what she could"*. What a challenge to us – we might wonder, what can we do? Make sure that you do what you can.
- 6) An example to others; an encouragement to others to remain faithful to God v38 *"she spake of him to all them that that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."*

Like Simeon, she was guided by the Spirit v38 *"coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord"*. Again the order is seen, first 'thanks unto the Lord' and then 'she spoke of him' to others. She spoke to *"all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."* The godly remnant *"they that feared the Lord spake often one to another"*.

What company do we seek? Do we seek the company of 'those that fear the Lord'?
What do we talk about? Do we 'speak of him'?