

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 2- Luke 2:36-38** 28- The Four Witnesses- Part 5

May 3, 2009

Luke 2:36-38

Now we're looking at Luke's Story of Salvation and we're moving through this incredible story of the birth of Jesus Christ- the astonishing and astounding reality that God came into the world in human form- in the form of a Baby, born to the virgin Mary- and everything that surrounds that.

And during these weeks together in **Luke**- we have seen the birth of Christ from four different perspectives. We have seen the Birth of Jesus from its *historical* perspective- or in the actual historical events that took place, and we've seen the Birth of Jesus from its *prophetic* perspective- the many prophecies that were given in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in the Birth of Christ, and we've seen it also from its *theological* perspective- diverting our attention to the first chapter of **Hebrews** we got the Divine theological commentary by God on the Birth of Christ, and we've also seen the Birth of Christ from the *covenantal* perspective- that is to say what did the Birth of Christ have to do with the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants and the great New Covenant?

And as we have looked at the Birth of Jesus from all four of these perspectives- our hearts and minds have been filled with wonder at just what actually was taking place here.

And I want you to know that every week when I prepare to go one step further in our long journey through this Gospel- I've been more and more amazed and astounded at the great realities that unfold in these verses. And I am trying with all my heart to share with you the amazement and wonder that fills my own soul.

And never is that more true than right here in **Luke 2:26-38** as we look at yet another perspective on the Birth of Christ and that is the

perspective of the true Jew in that day- the small remnant of genuine believers as they responded to this amazing moment when God came down and became flesh.

Now I know that I have said this several times before- but I want to say it again this morning that it is utterly fantastic that the eternal God- the Owner and Creator of the Universe- the one true and living God- the Controller of history- the One Who shapes and Who writes history which is really "His story"- it is fantastic to think that the very same God Who created the Universe will one day un-Creatate it- that the One Who *creates* history will also *conclude* history.

And it is incredible to think that the God Who is too big and too great for the Universe to hold Him has determined to reveal Himself in this one single Book. The world is full of books- but only one Book contains the inspired, inerrant, infallible Revelation of God, and only one Book contains all the Promises of God, and the very heart and soul of all those hundreds and hundreds of Promises is the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Amazingly, this one collection of these 39 Books- the Old Testament, contains all the Messianic Promises that was ever given. And the Old Testament contains all the Covenantal Promise that was ever given. And even more amazing is that these 39 Books were written by 31 men- most of whom never met each other- over a 1400 time frame on three different continents and these Books were supernaturally protected and maintained and copied and recopied thousands of times by thousands of different people, and kept for thousands of years, and then these 39 Books were compiled together into what we now call The Old Testament and was published and was in wide circulation over 200 years *before* Jesus was born. And that fact is very significant because since the Old Testament was published and was in wide circulation 200 years before Jesus was born- then nobody could go back and change anything that was in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah and what He would do and where He would be born once the 39 Books were printed, and so Jesus had to fulfill those recorded prophecies and all those hundreds and hundreds of verses had to be accomplished precisely as they were recorded in order to be the Messiah.

And what is even *more* amazing is how that this one Book that reveals the one true living God was given to just one people- the Jew, and to only one nation- the nation Israel. And even more amazing than

that is that out of that one single small nation and out of all those millions of Jews - there was only a tiny remnant who actually believed the 39 Books at any given point in their history.

You see, the average Jew who lived in an average city in Israel during these days did not love or worship God any more than the average American worships God. And most Jews were not in any way aware of what was going on in the life of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Joseph and Mary, and they were not in any way knowledgeable about what was going on in Bethlehem when the Savior was born and when God became flesh, and what was going on here in Jerusalem with Simeon and Anna.

We have to know that the average person in Israel during these days was unsaved and lukewarm and backslidden and didn't desire to keep the Law any more than the average person here in America is trying to obey the Bible in our day. The average Jew of the first century was completely unaware of God and was not earnestly looking for the Consolation of Israel or the Redemption of Jerusalem like Simeon and Anna were in these verses.

Several years ago a fine Anglican Theologian by the name of David Gooding said this,

"Israel has never been a nation marked by unqualified obedience, anymore than other nations have. When they came out of Egypt, singing their songs of redemption, no one had dreamed that hidden in the hearts of most of them lay as yet unformed thoughts of sheer rebellion against God, their Redeemer. But the wilderness by God's deliberate intention exposed them."

The prophets of Israel knew this. They knew that human nature is the same in all ages, and Jeremiah knew it and he said in **Jeremiah 17:9**:

The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

"And even the prophet Isaiah"...says Gooding..."as he looked forward to the consolation of Israel knew that beneath the outward forms of religion they're lurked still in many hearts the same spirit of rebellion, and he knew that the first defect of the coming of Christ would be to provoke their hidden rebellion into open antagonism."

"In a sense"...writes Gooding..."Christ had to do that for there could be no consolation of Israel until the latent rebellion against God had been brought out into the open and had been recognized for what it was, repented of and forgiven,"

So when you look at the history of Israel- the OT prophets and David Gooding are absolutely right. One single Book- containing the full Revelation of God up to that time- given to one people and one nation, and yet there is only this tiny little group of people who believed it and who were actually trying to live it. Only a remnant- even back then. And as I have said many times- there weren't many in the remnant because when the whole 3-1/2 year ministry of Jesus was over and all the believers in Jerusalem gathered in the Upper Room- there was the sum total of 120 of them. Just imagine how small that remnant is today- 2,000 years after this moment that Luke tells us about here.

But among that little remnant who took the Old Testament seriously and who believed it- there was an old couple- Zacharias and Elizabeth, and there was a young couple- Joseph and Mary, and there was this old man named Simeon and this old woman named Anna. Six people who *did* believe and who *were* faithful among millions who did not believe and who were not faithful- six people and God used them to change the world!

And in this section of Scripture- something very important is happening because Jewish tradition and culture was founded upon the Divine Revelation of God, and because of that- it was essential that any statement about God be confirmed by two or three witnesses. And Luke has just given us several fantastic claims about the events surrounding the birth of Jesus- that God had been born in human flesh, that the Son of God, the Son of the Most High God has come into the world, the Savior of the world and King to save His people from their sins. And so it is very important that what Luke has testified about so far be confirmed by witnesses who are reliable and trustworthy and so their own personal character and godliness comes into play here.

So, so Luke picks three witnesses:

1. The parents of Jesus- Joseph and Mary
2. Simeon

3. Anna

And the fact that all of these witnesses are reliable and trustworthy is not arguable precisely because Luke gives us great detail about the godly character of each of these individuals. The Bible says that both Joseph and Mary were righteous. And we also know that Simeon was righteous. Look back at **Luke 2:25**. It says, "**This man was righteous and devout**". And what that means is that Simeon was justified, he was right with God, he was saved, and his sins had been forgiven because he had repented and believed. Not only was he "just", but Luke also tells us that Simeon was "devout". Now the Greek word here actually means: *cautious*, which is to say that Simeon was very cautious in how he lived his life so that he would carry out obedience to the Law of God, and, so, from that we can say that Simeon was justified and was walking with God.

And Luke tells us that Simeon was looking for something called "*The Consolation of Israel*". Now the Consoler or the One Who consoles Israel is someone called the Manacham, that's the Jewish term that the rabbis all used for the Messiah early in the first century, and the Bible says, "the Holy Spirit was on Him". And we heard this morning from these verses about the testimony of Simeon how Simeon affirmed in **Luke 2:29-32** when he picked up the little baby Jesus there in the Temple and blessed God and said,

**29 “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
According to Your word;**

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

**32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people
Israel.”**

Now when you see how Simeon referred to Jesus- think back to the testimony of Joseph and Mary as to the identity of their child. That was indicated when they named Him Jesus, as Gabriel had told them, for He was the Son of the Most High God who would be named Jesus for He had come to save His people from their sins. So, from that Promise given to them by an angel- they named their boy- "Jesus"- which is to say, "Yahweh saves" or "God saves".

And they also gave us insight into their knowledge of who He was in presenting Him back to God, as much as Hannah did with Samuel, realizing that this was indeed a miracle Child from God. So both Mary and Joseph knew that this was a virgin-born miracle Child- Who was literally the Son of God, and they went to the Temple in Jerusalem to give Him back to God. And so clearly they affirmed who He was, and so did Simeon.

Now there are a couple of things that we have not covered yet about Simeon that I would just like to brush over again. I want you to notice **Luke 2:30** and I think it's important just to throw this in if for nothing else than for the tape down the road when people listen to the account of Luke and they might miss this.

Here in **Luke 2:30**- Simeon recognizes that God is a saving God. He says, "**my eyes have seen Your salvation.**" And he's connecting eternal Salvation with God.

And I think today that we generally connect Salvation with Jesus Christ and that is a good thing. But what we must keep in mind is that God the Father is also a Savior by Nature, and not just when Jesus came to the earth. In fact, if you were raised in Roman Catholicism, that's very much the experience you had. Because the way it works in Roman Catholic theology is that God the Father doesn't come across as being a saving God at all. God the Father comes across as a judging, condemning, very hard, and a very threatening God. And you certainly wouldn't want to go to the Father for Salvation.

And in Catholic theology- Jesus is much gentler and a little milder than the Father- but even at that- Jesus is still a bit harsh because after all- Jesus did make a whip and cleaned out the Temple, and He had some pretty scathing statements that he made to the Jewish leaders of His time, and Jesus spoke very forthright against sin, and when He comes back in the future He comes literally to blast sinners with the fury of His Wrath.

So Roman Catholic theology says, if you want Salvation and forgiveness of sin- then the best person to go to is Mary because she's real soft and gentle, and if you just go to Mary- she's very easy to win over. And once you get Mary on your side- Mary will talk to Jesus and nobody can resist their own mother- not even Jesus. So Mary will convince Jesus and Jesus will in turn convince God and then God will save you.

That is the gist of Roman Theology about Salvation. In fact, they even go so far as to teach that you will be more likely to convince the saints first than to try to convince God to save you, and that the dead saints will go to Jesus on occasion and convince Jesus Who in turn goes to God about your plight.

But nothing could be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is that the Bible always presents God as being a merciful and a saving God. It's His nature all the way through Scripture to save. From the Garden when He said, "Adam, where are you?" He's been seeking to save. And that flows through all Scripture. I remind you of **Luke 15**, a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son, and every time- they were found- all of heaven rejoices. So God is by Nature a Savior. And we're reminded of that here in what Simeon says. So saving is not something that is foreign to God.

And I keep thinking back to **2Corinthians 5:17** where he says,

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

And then in the very next verse- verse 18 it says:

Now all *these things* are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ...

So saving those who are lost is not foreign to God's Nature because God is *naturally* a Savior. That's Who God is- God saves lost sinners. And as I told you before- no other false religious Deity in all of the world's religions is like the one true living God.

And not only is God a Savior, but Simeon says God has prepared a Salvation for the whole world. Look again at **Luke 2:31 & 32**:

31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel."

And that is why later on- Jesus told Nicodemus that God so loved the entire world- that it is not just the Jews who will be saved- but people out of every nation, tribe, and tongue. And that is why Jesus

told the disciples to go out into all the world and "preach the gospel". God wants Salvation to come to every nation of the world, and while everybody in those nations will never be saved- *some* out of every nation on earth will be saved.

So the point is that the Gospel is never to be an isolated message- it was never to be a message that was only for Israel. And when God called Israel to be a nation, He didn't call them to be the *end* of His Plan of Salvation. He called them to be the *means* of that Plan- but not the end. Jesus didn't call the Jew so that they could receive it all and then sit on it- but so that they would take it to all the world. And likewise, dear friends, God didn't call you to savor the richness of God and then sit on it and become a spiritual glutton- constantly drinking more and more in- but to open your heart and pour out of your heart that which God has graciously poured in.

And that great reality is that what Simeon unfolds here- really for the first time- is that it is God's Will for Salvation to go past the Jews and to the Gentiles.

But Simeon knew the Old Testament and he believed it. He was a fundamentalist and a literalist because he believed seriously the Old Testament. He believed what Isaiah said, and Isaiah had prophesied repeatedly that the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles and not to only the Jews.

Now don't you know that both Joseph and Mary were amazed when they heard what was being said about their eight day old Baby? Every time somebody says something to them about their child- it keeps on getting larger and larger- the scope of what this Child will do keeps getting larger and larger. First the angel told Mary and Joseph that Jesus would save God's people from their sins. Then the shepherds came in out of breath to tell them that the angel said that Peace would come to those whom God has chosen to give Peace. And now Simeon speaks her about Jesus being a light- not just to the Jew- but to the Gentiles as well.

But then there is something else that is amazing, as we just saw in **Luke 2:34 &35**- Simeon also said that with *this* Child- negative and bad things would come and not just good things. Let's read those two verses again together:

34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—

35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

So Simeon says that not only will there be great and wonderful things happen through this Child- but there will be negative things as well. There will be a separation. Jesus will be for both a fall and a rise of many in Israel. He would be the dividing line- the point of demarcation. There would be- on the basis of Jesus Christ- many who would rise to eternal life, and on that same Jesus- there would be many who would fall to perdition by how they responded to Christ.

And Simeon says that Jesus would also be not only for separation but also for opposition. Jesus would be severely opposed in everything thing that He says and everything that He does.

And in **Luke 2:35**- Simeon says that there would be affliction, and here God promises Mary that a sword would cut her to the very soul as she watches both her Son distance Himself from her, and as she saw her Son mocked and finally murdered.

Mary would also have a sword pierce her own soul when she saw her beloved nation Israel reject their own saving merciful Messiah. And then finally there would be revelation. First there is separation, then there is opposition, then there is affliction, and finally there would be revelation- because Jesus would manifest Himself to the heart of Man.

In other words, hypocrisy would be exposed, apostasy would be exposed, and while many are being offended by Jesus- the very same things that offends and pushes those people away- draws others to Jesus.

And that's essentially what the quote was saying that I read you from David Gooding, that when Jesus came- there was a test going on. You can go back to **Deuteronomy 8** and you'll find there that the wilderness wandering was really a test- it was a test to find out what was in the hearts of the people of Israel. And if *that* was a test- how great a test was the arrival of Messiah? How great a test was that?

So what God did in sending the Messiah was to bring the Savior, but at the same time- by bringing the Messiah- God brought to the surface- the hidden rebellion against God that was underneath the

superficial Judaism, and so by being confronted with Jesus- the works righteousness and the legalism came out for all to see. Jesus pulled the lid off their souls and all the filth of their hypocrisy and their apostasy came to the surface to such a degree that they became wicked toward the Prince of Peace, they became evil toward the Prince of Life, they became hostile toward the only One Who could save them to such a degree that they actually executed their own Messiah and Savior.

That's how profoundly wicked they were just under the surface. And the mystery is that their wickedness and their evil looked good to them, it looked right, it looked holy, it looked religious.

And it does so to this day. You can go to the land of Israel right now and you will see religion demonstrated like few other places on earth, and you will see serious orthodox Jews genuflecting at the Wailing Wall. And you can go into the little synagogues that are tucked here and there and you can participate by standing and listening as they genuflect by the hour through their prayers and cycle through their prayer shawls and as they fastidiously study the Law, as they go through all of the routine and all the ritual. And it all looks so religious and it looks as if they were really devoted to God, and the fact of the matter is, under the surface there is a frightening and deadly apostasy and hypocrisy that is clearly manifest in the fact that they will not acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. They will not accept Him or bow to Him or believe in Him. And that sin is their true condition.

And this is all news to Mary and Joseph. I mean, they expected the Messiah to come and all the Kingdom Promises to come to pass. But that isn't how it happened. And here we are two thousand years later, and a lot of those Promises still haven't come to pass, and the heart of God's people is still set against Jesus, and, therefore, it's revealed to be a heart of hypocrisy and apostasy.

And so, Simeon testifies about the Messiah, "This is the Child!" And the Spirit of God confirmed it. Hear the whole story from Joseph and Mary. Then the Spirit of God inspired Simeon and gave him this which is called the "Nunc Dimittis"- which is this wonderful hymn of praise in which he identifies this little Baby as being the Light of the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel. That is what Simeon did here.

Now the last human witness is introduced to us in **Luke 2:36**. So let's read that again together:

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband seven years after her marriage,

37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

38 At that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

So here is the third eye-witness to the reality of the Messiah that Luke gives us. And again, so little is said about her and yet behind the scenes so much is indicated here. And I hope I can squeeze it all in- in just the next few minutes.

Let's start at the beginning of verse 36.

And there was a prophetess, Anna ...

Now this woman named, "Anna", is a lot like the "Hannah" of **1Samuel 1**. In fact, if you go back to **1Samuel 1** and look at Hannah, you'll see that she too was characterized by prayer and fasting, and so was Anna. The Hebrew name "Anna" is a lovely name. In fact, you might want to think about that next time you have a little girl, the name Anna means "Grace". And this Anna had been graced by God. She had been graced by God to be a prophetess.

Now I realize that there is a lot that is written and taught today about just what a prophetess really is- and that subject needs to be gotten into- but this morning let me just say that a prophetess is not somebody who predicts the future- she was not a fortune teller and she was not somebody who worked on the psychic hot line. A Prophetess is not somebody who gets a feeling in her abdomen or who wakes up in the middle of the night by the Voice of God, but she was simply a woman who speaks. To prophesy in this sense is simply to speak or to "forth tell" or to pronounce or to teach.

So Anna spoke or in other words- Anna was a teacher. She was a speaker. And she didn't speak about her *own* opinions or about the cultural cause of the day or her own private interpretation- no, Anna simply spoke God's Truth. She spoke God's Word.

Now she may well have been a teacher of the 39 Books of the Old Testament to other women all during her life- but what is certain is that she was certainly not a *source* of Divine Revelation. There is no Revelation that has ever come from her and none comes in this passage either. But she was known as one who taught or one who spoke.

Now all throughout the Old Testament, there are only three women who prophesied. One is Miriam in **Exodus 15**- who was a sister to Moses. The other is Deborah in **Judges 4**- who was one of the judges before the monarchy in Israel. And the other is a woman named Huldah in **2Kings 22**.

So you only have three prophetesses in the entire Old Testament, and if you study Miriam and you study Deborah and you study Huldah, you will not find an ongoing prophetic ministry such as you do with the men who were Prophets in the Old Testament who were largely life-long Prophets. You find that these three women prophesied or spoke or taught at some event or at some moment or at some important time for a specific reason.

Now to put that in to perspective, in **Isaiah 8:3** it refers to Isaiah's wife as a prophetess- the same way it does to Anna. But if you study the book of **Isaiah** and the history around Isaiah- you don't have any record of anything that she ever said or taught. So she didn't get any Revelation from God that was intended to be passed on to anyone. There is no record that Isaiah's wife ever prophesied on any occasion either and yet she's called a prophetess here, and most Bible scholars *assume* that she is a prophetess in only one remarkable sense- and that is what it says in **Isaiah 8:3**:

So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz;

...which was not a very choice name in any age. And that name was prophetic and it means exactly what the next verse says:

For before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

God said, "*Name him this incredibly difficult name because you're going to be plundered!*" - that's what it boils down to- because that's exactly what's going to happen. This nation of Israel is going to be plundered.

So, this woman is identified as a prophetess only in the sense that her child is sort of a prophecy by the name that God gave it because of how God is going to judge Israel.

So the use of the term "prophetess" in this case is a title for Isaiah's wife, and she knows that it doesn't necessarily indicate an ongoing prophetic ministry or any Divine Revelation. And again as you look at Miriam, Huldah and Deborah, they don't have any ongoing ministry described in Scripture either, but God occasionally and at times did use women for a particular reason- mostly to put to shame all the men who were sitting on their hands and doing nothing. Even in the New Testament- the daughters of Philip prophesied, it says.

And we know that God absolutely does use women to teach. And occasionally God used them in remarkable moments of redemptive history for remarkable purposes. But never in any case did any of them ever receive Divine Revelation from God as did the Prophets.

Now I say all this not in any way to discount the purposes and the role of women but rather to *elevate* their place in life and to emphasize that for women to be used like this is not the normal Purpose of God. We know that, for example, the 39 books of the Old Testament, that none was written by a woman. We know that two Books- Esther and Ruth are *named* for women but we have no indication that they were written by women, certainly not by the women whose name they bear.

And of all the 27 Books of the New Testament- none was written by a woman. Of all the Old Testament prophets with an ongoing prophetic ministry and revelatory ministry- none is a woman. And of all the Apostles of the New Testament- none is a woman. Of all the Elders of the Church- none were women. And that is simply Biblical facts because that is God's Way- not Man's.

And so God has designed that He would work through the man- who is given headship, as it were- from Adam on down, according to **1Timothy 2**, and that the woman would come alongside the man as a "help meet"- to help the man in what God has called the man to do.

But the woman is delivered from any second-class status because while she is not the head, and she is not the spokesman, and she is not

the one who speaks for God in the assembly of the people- she is the one who by virtue of raising children has the greatest amount of personal influence in the earth. That's why Paul says she'll be "saved" through her childbearing. The woman is "saved" in the sense that she is saved from being neglected, and she is "saved" from living an unfulfilled life, and she is "saved" from being made a second class citizen, and she is "saved" from being the personal property of the man by the bearing and raising of children.

And, therefore, Worship is the struggle that we go through to change the way we think and that we live our daily lives in humble submission to the Will of God as recorded in Scripture so that we may be found faithful to this Biblical pattern of the role of men and women, and that also means that Sin is the act of rebelling against or of ignoring this Biblical Pattern.

So this dear lady is a prophetess, and it could mean nothing more than that she has been a faithful teacher for many years in Jerusalem, or it could well mean that at this moment in time the Lord compelled her to *become* a teacher. It may be that Anna *becomes* a prophetess or a teacher right now as she sees Jesus and as she hears Simeon in the sense that she now speaks of this child as being the Messiah to all of those who look for Redemption in Jerusalem.

And that is the better understanding of this passage- that Anna walked in and found Joseph, Mary, and the baby, and she heard what Simeon speaks, and then after that- Anna begins to prophesy or to teach that Messiah had come to all of those who were earnestly looking for the redemption of Jerusalem and by doing that- she is a prophetess.

Now Anna is further identified for us in **Luke 2:36** as:

... the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher ...

Now remember that every single Word in the Bible was God breathed. So this is not just information- it is *important* information and something that Luke wants Theophilus and us to know. Now the name Phanuel is a transliteration of the Hebrew name Penuel, also Peniel...P-e-n-i-e-l, another Old Testament name, and this man was **“of the tribe of Asher”**. Now you say, "Is this important?" Yes it's very important.

Does the name, Asher ring a bell? Asher was one of the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. Remember that God judged Israel for their many sins and He divided the nation into two kingdoms after Solomon's reign. Ten tribes went north and that Kingdom was called "Israel", and two tribes stayed south and was called "Judah".

And in 722 B.C., the northern kingdom was taken into captivity by the Assyrians. God was angry with Israel and their abominations, and so He raised up Assyria and a man by the name of Sargon II and God put it in his heart to invade the northern Kingdom, and they destroyed the northern Kingdom and carried the Jews away captive. The capital city of Assyria was Damascus, and the northern kingdom was taken away captive and they never returned.

Now if you have ever heard anybody talk about the ten lost tribes of Israel- this is what they are talking about. And there are a lot of legends about what happened to these ten tribes; there are a lot of specious books that are not true that have been written about these so called "Lost Tribes", and because we humans are inclined to believe a lie much easier than we believe the Truth- many people actually believe these legends today.

But in any event- what *is* true is that these Ten Tribes were taken captive by the Assyrians and they just vanished from history. And some of these legends go so far as to say that the ten tribes that were taken away captive migrated across the north of Europe and came across the English Channel and ended up in England and eventually came over here to America, and so these crazy people teach that the ten lost tribes of Israel are really us- Americans. And that is what the Worldwide Church of God taught for decades and decades and others have taught that. This is also very similar to what the Mormons teach.

So the question has always been if the ten tribes were all taken away and they never came back- then when you come to **The Book of the Revelation** in the end time, you've got the 144,000 witnesses, and you've got 12,000 from every ...what? Every tribe, right? So you can't take that verse literally if ten tribes are lost. They may be lost to us- but they are certainly not lost to God. God knows the heart of every man.

So let me help you with that a little bit. This old lady named Anna is here long after 722 B.C. And Luke tells us that Anna is of the tribe of Asher- which was one of those so-called ten lost tribes. And at

least seven centuries have passed since the northern Kingdom was taken into captivity and yet Luke knows what tribe Anna is from.

So we have to know that long before 722 BC- there had been a steady migration of Jews from the north down into the southern kingdom.

Now if you know your Bible history of the northern kingdom called Israel- then you know that there were how many good kings in Israel? None. Zero. Not one king was good. The Jews of the northern Kingdom were deep into idolatry. There wasn't one single good king. And there was a remnant of believing Jews up there who weren't happy with that. And there were those who wanted to be a part of the Temple and the things of God. And so all during the time when the nation of Israel was divided- there was a steady migration downward out of Israel and into Judah because of the city of Jerusalem and because of the Temple and because of the priesthood.

So by the time that the northern kingdom was taken into captivity in 722 BC- there were people from all the ten tribes of Israel down inside Judah- who had systematically migrated south. In fact, in **2Chronicles 30:6** we read this:

The couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes, even according to the command of the king, saying, "O sons of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that He may return to those of you who escaped *and* are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria.

Now the "posts" were couriers, and so couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes and even according to the command of the king saying, *"O sons of Israel, return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel that He may return to those who escaped and are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria."*

So there's a warning- **"Return to the Lord God!"** And part of that turning back to God was going South. Now in **2Chronicles 30:11** it says,

Nevertheless some men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.

So we see that some of the men of Asher, and some of the men of Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and they left the north Kingdom and they traveled south to go to Jerusalem and one of those men was the ancestor of this woman named Anna.

And that's just one little glimpse of a rather steady migration that went on for years *before* 722 B.C. so that eventually people from all twelve tribes had migrated south and so they were not completely lost- there was a remnant that was spared. And that occurred also during the revival under King Josiah.

So that when 602 B.C. comes and you have the first deportation of Judah- the *southern* kingdom- the north had already been gone for over 120 years- and the southern kingdom is finally taken captive between 602 to 589 B.C., and finally in 586 B.C. there are three deportations of the southern Kingdom of Judah to Babylon- but what we need to know is that all those who were taken to Babylon represented all twelve tribes.

So at the end of the 70 years of that captivity when they came back from Babylon- there are Jews from all twelve tribes that come back under Nehemiah to establish themselves in the land so that 700 or so years later- Luke still knows that this woman named Anna is of the tribe of Asher.

And the Jew continued to know what tribe they were from until after Jesus ascended into Heaven when in 70 A.D.- 1,100,000 Jews were slaughtered by Titus Vespasian when he thundered in and destroyed Jerusalem, and over the next few years- 985 towns in Israel were literally massacred. And in the massacre and the destruction of the Temple and the slaughter that followed- the Jews lost all their records and they were all utterly destroyed. And so today a Jew has no idea what tribe they're from.

And this all goes back to God's Sovereignty as we know that in The Revelation 14- God is going to assemble 144,000 Jews - 12,000 from each of the twelve Tribes. So even though no Jew today knows what tribe he is from- God knows and He will Sovereignly gather them during the Tribulation to preach His Word.

So Luke tells us that Anna was from the tribe of Asher which was just a little reminder that the ten tribes weren't lost at all- they were still there; they were still around.

Now by the way- Asher is a good name- it means, "Happy". And Asher was the second son of Leah's maid Zilpah and the eighth son of Jacob, according to **Genesis 29** and **30**.

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.