

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

ANNA: LESSON SEVEN

by Sandy Harber

"... and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Luke 2:38b

Anna had seen the Redemption of God in the form of a helpless baby. She instantly recognized that this was the Messiah - the Savior of her people. She joined Simeon in praising and thanking the Lord for allowing them to see God's Anointed in the flesh. Neither Anna nor Simeon would live to see Jesus begin His public ministry 30 years hence. They would not be there at the foot of the cross to comfort His mother as the sky darkened. They would not hear His last words, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30).

Anna had prayed in the Temple daily for 84 years. Surely some of her prayers centered on God's promise of a Redeemer. That first promise was given in the Garden of Eden right after Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree (Gen. 3:15). The disobedience of our original parents brought sin upon the whole human race (Rom. 5:12) so that we are all born with a sin nature (i.e. an inclination to disregard God's instructions). And by exercising that sin nature we have all earned spiritual death: eternal separation from God (Rom. 6:23) in a place of never-ending torment (Lk. 16:23-25).

Jesus warned that everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin (Jn. 8:34). Under the Mosaic Law people who fell into hard times could indenture themselves for a time. They could, then, serve out their full time or they could buy their way out of slavery. Since the "slave" indentured himself because he had no money he couldn't redeem (buy back) himself but a near relative could pay the price for him and "redeem," or buy him back, out of slavery (Lev. 25:47-49). Jesus voluntarily became our Kinsman Redeemer. He bought us back from the slave market of sin and set us free.

For this purpose, the divine Son of God took on the form of a human being (Phil. 1:5-8) making Him a Kinsman to the whole human race. As a human being Jesus was now equipped with the price of human redemption: blood (Heb. 9:22). But the sacrifice had to be without spot or blemish - a sinless Human with perfect blood was required to satisfy the demands of a Holy God (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The Kinsman Redeemer had to be willing and able to redeem. Jesus went to the cross voluntarily (Heb. 12:2) as the perfect Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29).

When His sacrifice was completed and the sin debt paid for every sinner, Jesus said, "it is finished" and died. The English words, "it is finished" is translated from one Greek word: "tetelestai." Tetelestai literally means "paid in full." When a Roman prisoner completed his sentence and was released from jail the judge would write the word "tetelestai" was on his Certificate of Debt (a document listing all the crimes he had committed). He could not be imprisoned again for those crimes. Likewise, our sin debt was paid in full by our Redeemer and we are free.

Anna told everyone she met that was looking for the Redeemer that she had seen Him. Imagine how excited she was after all the years of serving in the Temple, looking for the fulfillment of God's promise, to be able to say, "I saw Him!" There were probably individuals who frequented the Temple who had discussed the prophecies of the Messiah with Anna. She would have eagerly looked for them to appear in the courtyard so that she could give them her good news.

Sharing the good news of Christ is a privilege. We call it "witnessing" because that's just what it is. We are giving testimony, facts that we have personally seen, heard, or experienced. What has God done for you? Tell somebody. Witness! It seems that the more difficult our lives are the more we have to share about the blessing of God. It's in the really hard times that we need Him the most and His care and support comes through the strongest. Our faith grows strongest in times of testing and trials. You have met Jesus where you are. Tell somebody. Tell everybody.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. 1 Peter 3:15.