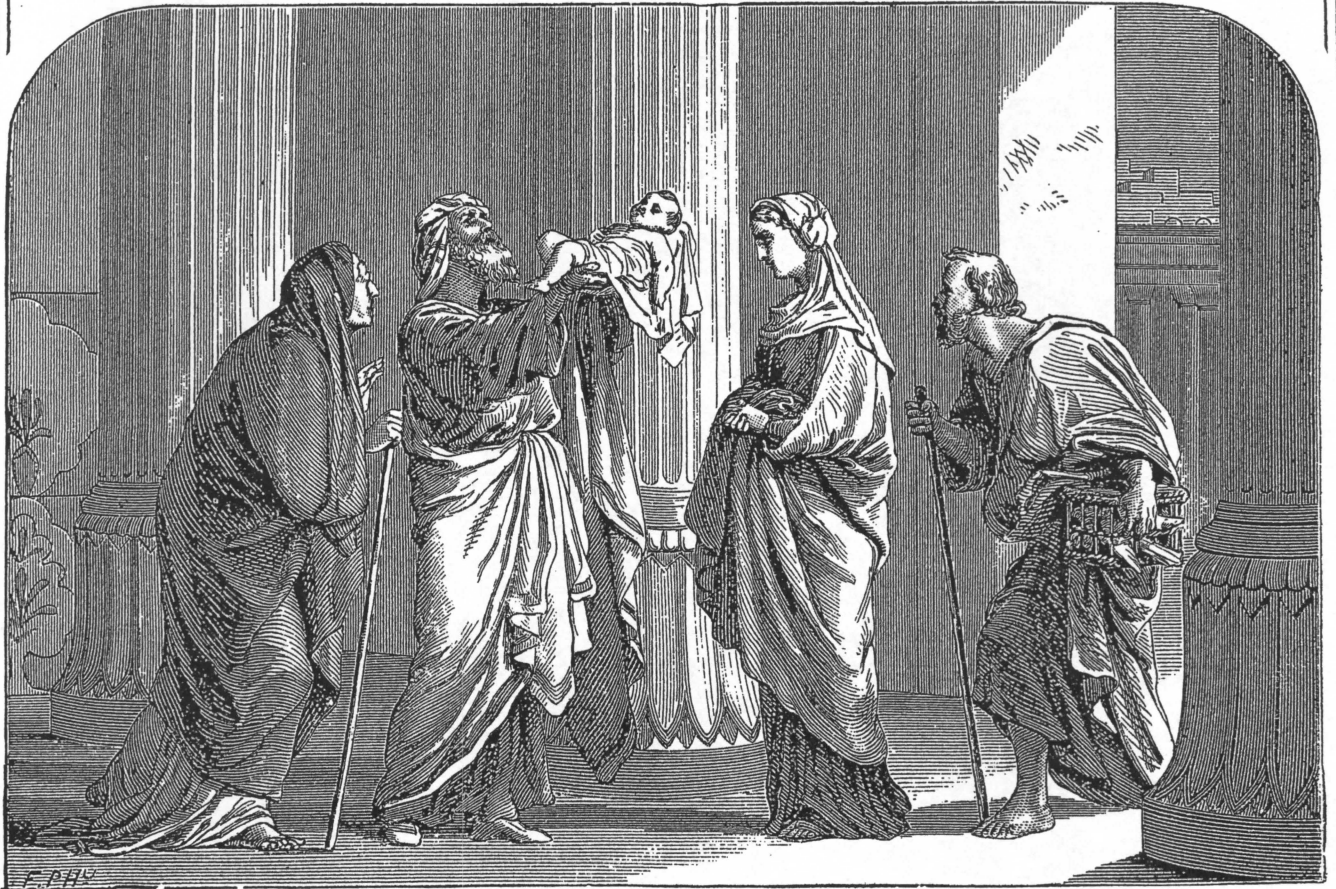


Anna: Senior Saint and Extraordinary Evangelist
Luke 2:36-38



SIMEON AND ANNA IN THE TEMPLE.

ANNA: SENIOR SAINT AND EXTRAORDINARY EVANGELIST

Luke 2:36-40

Because only three verses are devoted to Anna, some have referred to Anna as the least important person in the Christmas story. For example, James Montgomery Boice writes:

Who is the least important character in the Christmas story? The least important person is the one who receives only three verses in Luke's long account of Jesus' birth. . . Here was a woman who was certainly the least of all the little people of the Christmas story. . . Yet, from what Luke tells us, she undoubtedly understood more about the full significance of the coming of Jesus Christ than any of the others who appear in the Nativity narratives (*The Christ of Christmas*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1983, 106).

Perhaps it will be better to say that Anna, like Joseph, was one of the most ignored persons in the Christmas story. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has given her a place of honor among those who expected the Redeemer of Israel. The three verses devoted to her are filled with important information about this senior saint. Her piety is an example for all believers.

Anna is mentioned by Luke, whose gospel has been called the "gospel of women." He makes about 43 references to women, four of whom were widows (v. 36-40; 7:11-15; 18:1-8; 21:1-4). Anna was a widow who devoted herself to the worship and service in the temple (cf. 1 Tim. 5:5). Providentially she was directed to Jesus, much like the Holy Spirit prompted Simeon to be in the temple (2:27).

1A. Her spiritual appointment:

Anna's name is the same as Hannah in the OT. It means "favor" or "grace". She was a prophetess. Jezebel, the false prophetess, is the only other one in the NT (Rev. 2:20) to bear this title. Philips' four daughters also prophesied (Acts). To prophesy simply meant to proclaim a divine message, given by special revelation, and included forth-telling this message or foretelling the future. Anna thus must be included in the long line of prophets and prophetesses who heralded the Messiah. But God, in His grace, permitted her to meet the object of her prophecies and subject of her prayers.

2A. Her ancestry:

Anna was the daughter of Phanuel, a name identical with Peniel and meaning "the face of God." The name of her husband who died young is not recorded.

Anna was of the tribe of Asher. As such she numbers among the few NT characters with tribal listings. Others include Jesus of the house of David, and tribe of Judah (Lk. 2:4; Mt. 1:1-16), Saul of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5) and Barnabus, a Levite (Acts 4:36).

Anna is the only person of note mentioned in the Bible of the tribe of Asher even though the name Asher means blessedness. The tribe of Asher was one of the tribes that did not return from captivity, although apparently some of the prominent families did. Alfred Edersheim has an interesting observation about the tribe of Asher: "Curiously enough, the tribe of Asher alone is celebrated in tradition for the beauty of its women, and their fitness to be wedded to High-Priest or King" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1953, 200).

3A. Her extraordinary age:

Luke's text is not clear whether Anna was a widow 84 years of age or whether she had lived as a widow for 84 years after the death of her husband. J. K. Elliott summarizes the somewhat confusing situation:

Translations and commentaries vary over Anna's age: some say she was a widow aged eighty-four (e.g. AV, RSV, NEB); others that she had been a widow for eighty-four years (e.g. RV). Some modern English versions (e.g. NIV, GNB) give one in the text, the other as a marginal alternative.

If she had been a widow for eighty-four years then Anna would have been over one hundred years old. We are not told at what age she married but fourteen years would be appropriate. She was married for seven years. This would mean she was about one hundred and five years old (*Novum Testamentum*, XXX, 1988, Fasc. 2, April 1988 p. 100).

Note the diagram in the appendix comparing the two interpretive possibilities.

Robin Gallaher Branch from the *Bible History Daily* gives some cogent support for Anna's age being over 100 years:

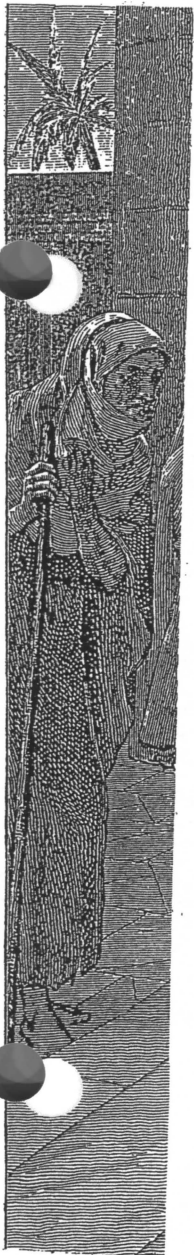
I tend to see her as 105 because it is in line with the numerous miracles and unusual occurrences already surrounding the Birth Narrative, including the advanced age of Zechariah and Elizabeth when John was conceived (Luke 1:7, 13, 18, 57), and the Holy Spirit's action of overshadowing Mary, who was able to conceive without intercourse (Luke 1:31-35). My point is this: age 105 is not out of line with Luke's narrative replete so far with angelic visitations and miracles—especially when Luke fills in with more details about Anna. In Deuteronomy, Moses prophesies that for the tribe of Asher, Anna's tribe, "your strength will equal your days" (Deuteronomy 33:25). Surely Anna's life shows evidence of that (<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible...> P. 2, accessed 10/6/2014).

Whichever interpretation is correct, she was of great age (2:36). Lockyer's comments are very much to the point:

She had grown old in the service of the sanctuary, and having seen, with Simeon, God's Salvation, was ready to depart in peace. How encouraging it is to meet these who through a long life have remained true to the Lord and whose gray hairs are honorable because of a life lived in the divine will, and who, when they pass away, are ready for glory (*All the Women of the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d., 30).

As an aged widow, Anna would have witnessed wars and wickedness in her nation. Yet these evils made her cling all the more to her God and undoubtedly issued in fervent prayers for political and spiritual redemption. Geike traces some of the vicissitudes that Anna would have observed:

She was eighty-four years of age, and had thus lived through the long sad period of war, conquest, and oppression, which had intensified, in every Jewish heart, the yearning for national deliverance by the promised Messiah. She must have remembered the fatal war between the Asmonean brothers, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, which had brought all the misery of her people in its train, and she had likely seen the legions of Pompey, when they encamped on the hills round Jerusalem. The rise of Herod was a recollection of her middle life, and its dreadful story of war, murder, and crime, must have sunk into her heart, as it had



into the hearts of all her race (Cunningham Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*, Vol. 1, New York: Appleton and Co., 1889, 133).

4A. Her marital adversity:

Anna was alone and might have faced a lonely and cheerless life. But, when God withdrew from her the earthly love she rejoiced in, she did not despair. In the place of what God took from her, He gave her more of Himself and she became totally devoted to the One Who had promised to be as a husband to the widows.

She was the ideal widow of whom Paul writes in 1 Timothy 5:3, 5: "Honor widows who are really widows. . . Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day."

Anna decided to serve the Lord and made God's house her dwelling place, in total devotion her Lord.

5A. Her daily activity:

Anna "departed not from the temple but served God with fasting and prayers night and day" (2:37). Anna stayed in the temple. This does not mean that she actually lived in the temple. Only the high priest had chambers there. One writer has stated the matter well:

She devoted herself to a life of fasting and prayer, continually attending upon the ministrations of the sanctuary. Not that she actually had apartments in the temple building—for there is no reason to suppose that any females had such—but that she stately presented herself there among the worshippers, and took part in the services which were proceeding. Even from the earliest times there seem to have been pious females dedicating themselves thus to a sort of priest-like consecration and constant service; for at Ex. xxxviii. 8 the laver of brass is said to have been made out of the mirrors of the women who daily assembled at the door of the tabernacle; it is, literally, the serving-women who served. Anna, in her latter years, joined herself to this class; and in answer to her faithful and devoted service, had the high honour conferred on her of becoming one of the immediate heralds of the Saviour of the world (Patrick Fairbairn ed., *Fairbairn's Imperial Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, 1957, 163

As a pious widow, she was faithful to the Lord and present always in His house to minister. What a blessing it would be to our churches if more widows would show a similar dedication to the house of the Lord and its various services.

6A. Her godly attributes:

Anna's life-long faithfulness to the Lord included fasting and prayers. Lockyer pays tribute to this dedicated widow, whose activities showed commendable godly attributes:

Without doubt, Anna was one of God's own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, and who was heard in that she feared. It was not in some retired nook of the Temple she prayed, or in a corner where females only supplicated God. She would join with others openly in the presence of the congregation and pour out her soul audibly in the Temple. The One to whose birth she witnessed was to say that praying and fasting are necessary requisites in a God-used life, and Anna not only prayed but also fasted. She was willing to miss a meal in order to spend more time before God. Hers was a life of godly self-control. She had learned how

to crucify the flesh in order to serve God more acceptably (*All the Women of the Bible*, 31).

7A. Her evangelistic ardor:

Anna stayed in the temple, served God with prayers and fasting, and spoke constantly of the coming Redeemer. Undoubtedly, her witness continued as she related to an ever-growing remnant how she had been privileged to gaze on the face of the long-promised Redeemer.

Edersheim writes of that faithful remnant in Jerusalem, most likely led by Anna:

Though Rabbinic tradition ignored them, they were the salt which preserved the mass from festering corruption. To her as the representative, the example, friend, and adviser of such, was it granted as prophetess to recognize Him, Whose Advent had been the burden of Simeon's praise. And, day by day, to those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, would she speak of Him Whom her eyes had seen, though it must be in whispers and with bated breath. For they were in the city of Herod, and the stronghold of Pharisaism (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 201).

Anna lived through dark days before Christ came. Through the darkness all around her she looked for the Dayspring from on high. Her faith was rewarded and her prayers were answered. She became the first female herald of the incarnate Redeemer.

Anna was a *widow* of great age, a *worshiper* of the living God and a *prophetess* proclaiming the Word. Once she saw the infant Immanuel, she became a *missionary* proclaiming the joyous news to her godly associates.

Application:

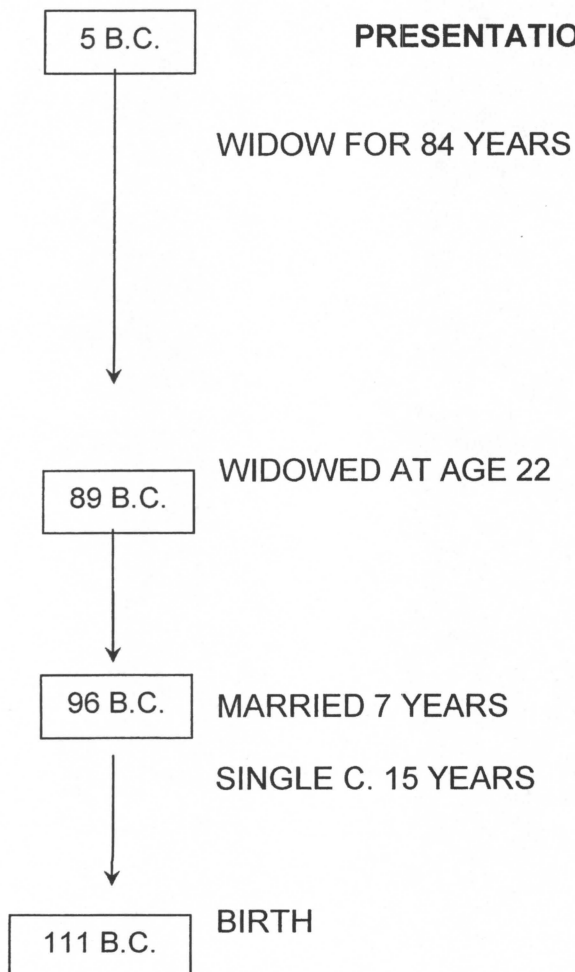
- (1) Anna demonstrated how widows, living through most trying circumstances, can lead a life of dedicated service.
- (2) Anna exemplifies the kind of godly widows who are pleasing to God and are desperately needed in our churches.
- (3) Anna declared the Savior she had met, like the shepherds who returned from their encounter glorifying and praising God (Lk. 2:20). Can we do less? May we take the opportunity, like the shepherds and Anna, to tell others about "the things we have heard and seen."
- (4) Anna prayed for the promised Deliverer. She had faith that God would keep His promise. Would Christ still have come if she had not prayed? Most certainly (Gal. 4:4). But God is pleased with the faithful prayers of His saints, requesting things which will surely come to pass. This is why we fervently pray, "Even so come Lord Jesus," realizing that the Savior, perhaps very soon, will keep His precious promise.

THE AGE OF ANNA

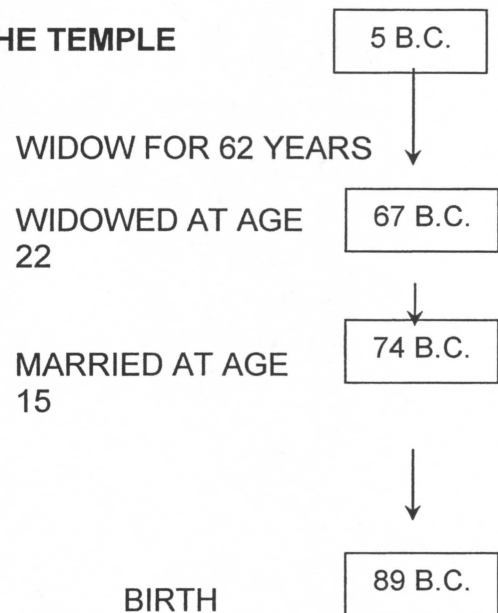
Luke 2:36-37

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;
³⁷ And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

IF ANNA WAS A WIDOW FOR 84 YEARS



IF ANNA WAS 84 YEARS OLD



ANNA'S TOTAL AGE: 106 YEARS





SIMEON AND ANNA

Luke 2:21-38



SIMILARITIES

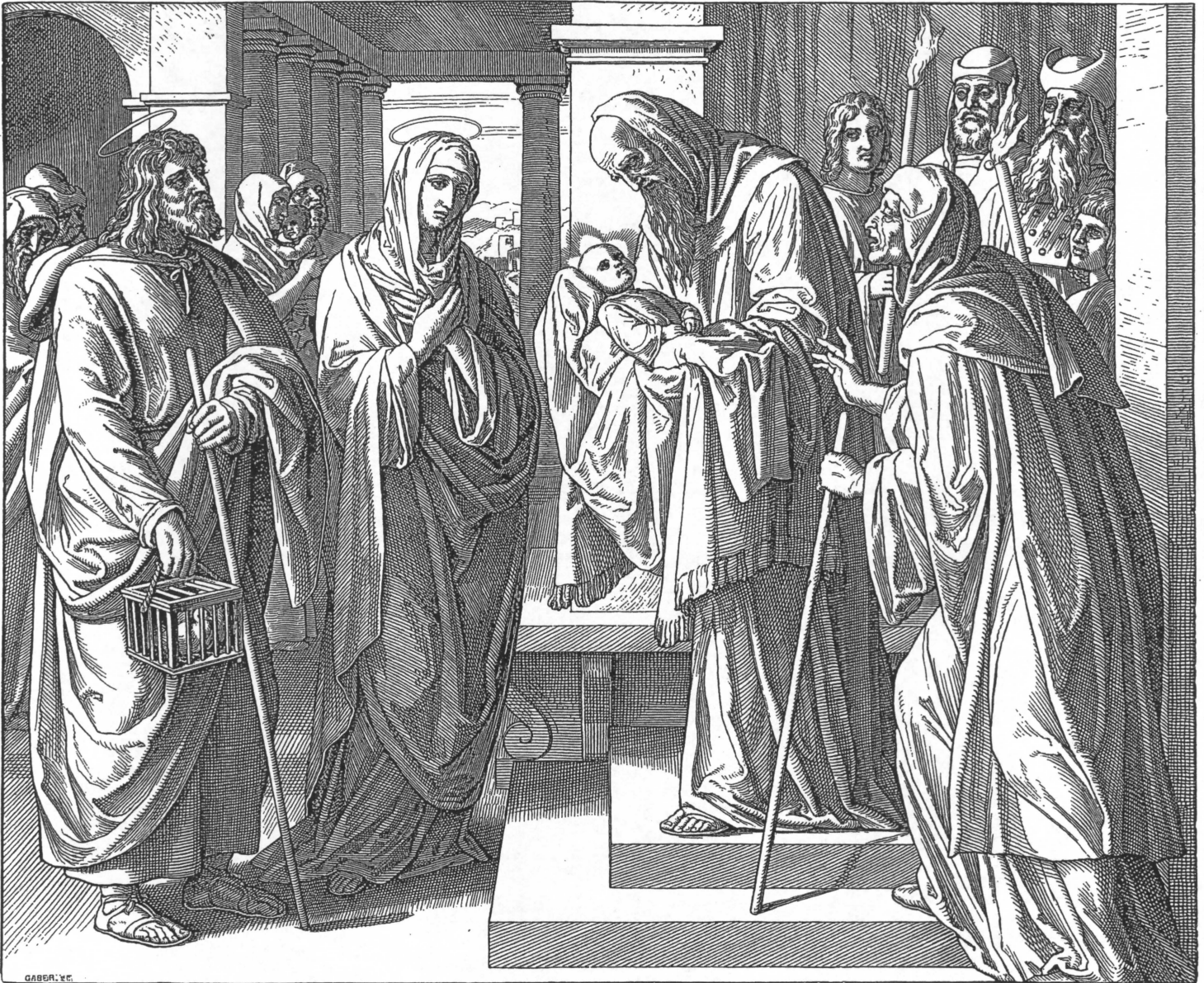
	<i>Simeon</i>		<i>Anna</i>
1	2:29	Great Age	2:37
2	2:27	Ministered in the Temple	2:37
3		A bridge between OT & NT	
4		Part of the faithful remnant	
5	2:29-35	Just and devout	2:38
6	2:25	Witnesses of their encounter	2:38

DIFFERENCES

1	Dwelt in Jerusalem 2:25	Residence	Dwelt in the Temple 2:37
2	Simeon: from shama, [the deity] hears	Meaning of the name	Anna: Grace or favor Anna offers thanks 2:38
3	Anticipated the consolation of Israel 2:25	Anticipation	Looked for the redemption of Israel 2:38
4	Directed by the Spirit to the Temple 2:27	The Holy Spirit	Kept by the Spirit in the Temple 2:37
5	Simeon praises God 2:28	Response	Anna offers thanks 2:38
6	Expectant saint 2:25	Activity	Saintly prophetess 2:36
7	The holy family 2:33-35	Audience	The expectant remnant 2:38

M. Haber, Th.D.

Christi Darstellung im Tempel und Simeons Weissagung.



Ev. Lucä. Kap. 2, Vers 22, 24—40.

CRUSHES SERPENT

Gen. 3:15



LION

SON OF DAVID

MELCHIZEDEK

SOVEREIGN

SHEPHERD



ENTHRONED

CHRIST'S DEITY

What Christ's disciples were unable to see, that the suffering Servant of Jehovah and the promised Monarch from the house of David were one and the same person, individuals like **Mary, Elizabeth, Simeon** and **Anna** joyfully anticipated. Their expectation of the consolation of Israel was richly rewarded by witnessing the arrival of the child born and the Son given (Isaiah 9:6).

CHRIST'S HUMANITY

BETRAYED

SMITTEN

SERVANT

AARON

SON OF ABRAHAM

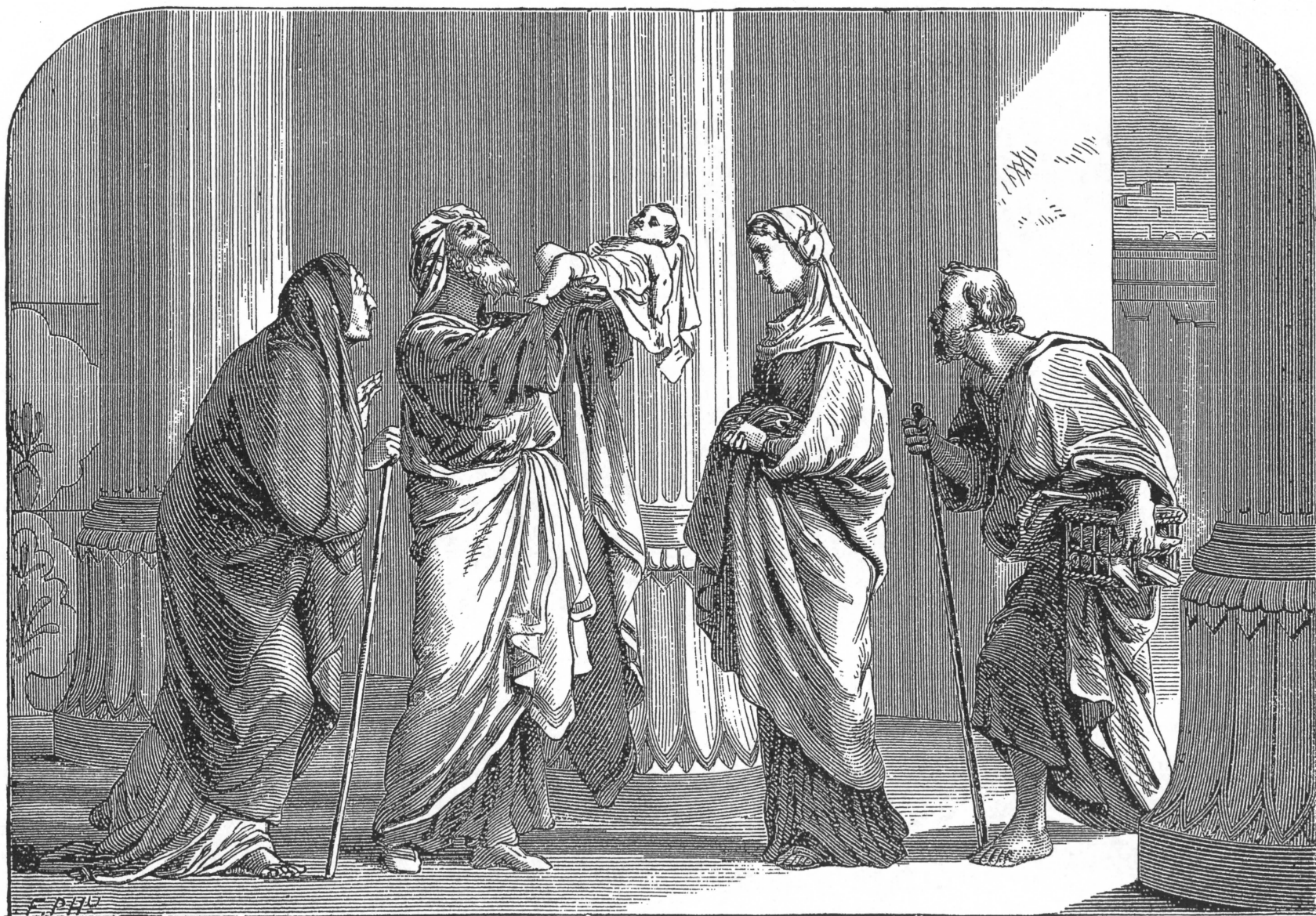
LAMB

HEEL BRUISED

GEN. 3:15



Manfred Kober, Th.D.



SIMEON AND ANNA IN THE TEMPLE.