

• *Anna – an elderly woman*

After Simeon comes Anna. The elderly man is followed by the elderly woman.

**1. A special ministry given to an elderly widow**

1. **We have here an example of a special ministry given to an elderly widow.** Anna is a prophetess. She had been married for seven years but then had lost her husband. At the time of our story she had been a widow 'up to eighty-four years' (not 'for' eighty-four years). This seems to mean that she is eighty-four years old at the time of her speaking about Jesus <sup>□1</sup>. Although her home area was Asher in the far north, she had come to Jerusalem and lived in the temple area. She spent her time in praying and giving words of prophecy to those who came to the temple <sup>□2</sup>.

□1 2:36

□2 2:37

• *Every believer has something to do for God*

An eighty-four-year-old widow might seem to be a person who will not have much of a ministry among the people of God. But God has a ministry for every one of His people. Every believer has something to do for God. Anna was called to spend much of her time in prayer. As she prays, God gives her words of prophecy to share with those who come to the temple.

**2. Confirmation of what Simeon had said**

2. **Anna's ministry at this point consisted of confirming someone else's ministry.** We are not told exactly what Anna said. She publicly praised God for sending Jesus but we are not told exactly what words she used <sup>□1</sup>. The more important matter was that she confirmed what Simeon had just said. Two godly people had been brought to the temple at the very point where Jesus was being brought for the necessary legal ceremonies.

□1 2:38

**3. Out of prayerfulness - a message of special encouragement for Mary**

3. **Anna's ministry arose out of great prayerfulness.** These two people, Simeon and Anna, were bringing messages from God that would sustain Mary in years to come. When Mary first heard about Jesus she rejoiced <sup>□1</sup>, but there are years of great suffering ahead of her. She will witness the rejection of her Son. She will see Him hang upon a cross. There will be times when she will wonder whether everything she thought she knew was actually wrong. She needs special encouragement to be able to keep going for many years.

□1 1:46-47

• *God's timing*

God's timing will encourage her. She will always remember that at the very point when she was bringing Jesus to the temple, two godly people were led by the Holy Spirit to arrive at that very moment to bring her words of encouragement from God. She will have to hold on the fact that an angel visited her <sup>□1</sup>. She will remember that her son was conceived without any human father. She could never be mistaken about that! She will remember that two of the most godly people in Jerusalem gave her special words of encouragement at the time of Jesus fulfilling the law of Moses. Then she will recall that she was warned that a sword would pierce her heart. The way of the Saviour would be a way of suffering for Him and for her.

□1 1:26-38

• *After the suffering – the Day of Pentecost*

The suffering would not go on forever. One day Mary would be present on the Day of Pentecost. She would see what was involved in her Son being the Saviour of the world. She would know that He was risen from the dead, and was appointed by the Father to be the King of the universe.

• *God reveals his secrets to those who pray*

• *Prophecy encourages*

**4. Anna – a person who spread the good news to individuals**

• *Prophetic ministry often given to those who have suffered, are lonely or are restricted*

• *Return to Nazareth*

• *Jesus grew in wisdom*

• *Jesus grew spiritually*

Prophecy arises out of great prayerfulness. Anna is called a prophetess, yet we are not told much about her prophecy; we are told more about her prayerfulness. God reveals secrets to us as we pray.

Prophecy is intended to encourage. Anna's word following after Simeon's words would give Mary encouragement for many years.

4. **Anna's ministry consisted of spreading good news to individuals.** She was not a preacher. She simply spoke about Jesus to everyone she knew who was waiting for God's Saviour. There were people in Jerusalem who were expecting a day of salvation, and a day when Jerusalem would be delivered from pagan enemies. They were expecting a Saviour to come, many to be saved, and Jerusalem to be given its freedom (in that order!) Anna knew that her task was to tell everyone God's programme had started moving forward. The Saviour had been born!

These are the marks of prophetic ministry. It arises from great prayerfulness. Such a ministry may well come to someone whose freedom in life is restricted, a widow, a person who has suffered greatly or is in a lonely position. It is a ministry that encourages, and it does so by pointing people to Jesus and His salvation.

After their visit to Jerusalem to fulfil the law, Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth in Galilee <sup>1</sup>. The Saviour was born. He now had to grow up. He would not start His main ministry until He was a man. But He was a real human being. The Saviour was not an angel or a spirit. He was a human being. He knew then, and He knows now, exactly what it is to live a real human life. He grew physically. *'The child grew up and was strong'* <sup>2</sup>. Jesus was a real human being. He followed the normal processes of eating and sleeping, getting exercise, taking care of His health. He grew up physically.

He grew in wisdom. He knew God from His earliest days. At some point He came to know that He was God's Son in a unique way. God was the only Father He had.

He even grew spiritually. God's grace and favour were upon Him. He obeyed God in everything. He learned to pray. God was putting Him through the ordinary processes of human life, so that He could be a real human being, able to sympathise with us at every point of our lives.

<sup>1</sup> 2:39

<sup>2</sup> 2:40



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