

## Who was Anna the prophetess in the Bible?

Anna is mentioned in the Bible as a prophetess and one of the people connected to Jesus' childhood. She was the daughter of Penuel from the tribe of Asher. Her name, which she shares with Hannah in the Old Testament, means "favor" or "grace." All we know of her is found in three verses in the New Testament book of Luke. When Anna encounters the infant Jesus in the temple, we see that her life is indeed overflowing with favor and grace.

"And there was a prophetess, Anna" (Luke 2:36, ESV). Anna is among only a handful of women in the Bible bearing the title "prophetess." The others are Miriam, the sister of Moses (Exodus 15:20); Deborah, the judge (Judges 4:4); Huldah, the wife of Shallum (2 Chronicles 34:22); Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3); and Philip's four unmarried daughters (Acts 21:9).

"She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four" (Luke 2:36-37). Anna had been married only seven years when she became a widow, and she remained a widow for the rest of her life. Most translations indicate that Anna was eighty-four years old when she met Jesus. But it is also possible to translate the text to mean Anna had lived eighty-four years after her husband died. That would mean Anna was at least 104 years old—if she had married at the age of thirteen. Either way, she had spent the vast majority of her life without a husband and was ministering before the Lord in the temple.

"She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying" (Luke 2:37). After becoming a widow, Anna dedicated herself wholly to the Lord. She never left the temple in Jerusalem but spent her time worshiping, fasting, and praying. It is possible that Anna was given living quarters at the temple because of her designation as

prophetess, or she may have lived close by. What stands out is that her devotion was constant for the majority of her life, and her devotion was rewarded with an encounter with her Savior. Her many years of sacrifice and service were worth it all when she beheld the Messiah, the One for whom she had waited so long.

“Coming up to them at that very moment” (Luke 2:38). Mary and Joseph arrive at the temple with the baby Jesus to satisfy the Old Testament law. They needed to make the purification offering (see Leviticus 12:6-8) and to present Jesus as their firstborn before God (see Exodus 13:2, 12-15). While they’re there, a man named Simeon cradles the Lord Jesus in his arms, praises God, and utters a prophecy concerning Jesus and Mary. At this moment, Anna enters. She immediately recognizes Jesus as the long-awaited Savior and begins thanking God.

“She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). Anna the prophetess is among the first few to bring honor to the kingly babe born in a stable. Good news is meant to be shared, and Anna shares it with everyone who was anticipating the Messiah. The Redeemer had come, the prophecies were being fulfilled, and Anna was blessed to see it happen.