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## The Breaker of Prophetic Silence (Let's Face It)

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Jo Ann Davidson\*

The study of biblical prophecy is always gripping. Despite the many critics throughout the centuries who have gone through all kinds of verbal contortions trying to prove that God cannot predict the future precisely, the record stands. And it always stirs me. Think of how God not only foretold Israel's history in advance, but even that of the pagan ruler Cyrus, who would grant the children of Israel freedom to return to their homeland from exile.

And what about the auspicious closing of the greatest of all time prophecies, the 2300 days of Daniel 8? It boggles my mind that God didn't just arbitrarily choose 1844 to complete that mighty span of prophetic time. No, He "timed" it to conclude just as Darwin's epic voyage would cause a majority of the world's great minds to give up their belief in Him as Creator and turn instead to an evolutionary ancestry. And just at this critical juncture of 1844, God sends forth the three

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angels of Revelation 14 to proclaim *worldwide* a call to worship the God "that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (KJV)—a lengthy

quote from the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. The exquisite timing of this 2300-day prophecy always makes me tingle!

Then there are the accumulative prophecies all through the Old Testament that point forward to the Messiah. This avalanche of specifics is so impressive. However, I want to focus this column on one often overlooked detail in the discussion of the prophecies involved in Christ's first advent.

Of course, we are all familiar with the role of John the Baptist in announcing the opening of Christ's public ministry, fulfilling the Old Testament predictions of the coming

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of Elijah in Malachi 4. Christ Himself acknowledges John as the explicit fulfillment of that prophecy (Matt. 17:10-13). However, in the discussion of John's significant ministry, I often hear that "John broke the 400 years of prophetic silence that Israel had been experiencing"—or some similar statement.

However, that conclusion is inaccurate—though I do not want in any way to diminish the significance of John the Baptist's ministry. Even so, the "prophetic silence" had already been broken at Christ's birth—and by a *woman*. Until the new emphasis on really taking note of every single word in the biblical narratives [the discipline is called "Narrative Analysis"], it has been common to pass over as unimportant many of the myriad details the Bible writers were inspired to include. In this particular case, Luke draws our attention to the fact that the "prophetic silence" was indeed broken at Christ's birth by the prophetess Anna:

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a

great age. . . and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant [of baby Jesus' dedication] she gave thanks to the Lord, *and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem*" (Luke 2:36-38, NKJV, italics added).

In the original language, the force of the verb in the phrase "and spoke of Him" implies a continual preaching of this stupendous event. It wasn't just a single Sabbath sermon. And see her proclaiming the Christ Event in the capital city, Jerusalem!

At this pivotal time in world history, when God is born as a baby boy, the widow Anna is the prophet God calls to proclaim the birth of His Son—and in the process *she* breaks Israel's long prophetic silence! To be sure, John the Baptist was the mighty forerunner of the Messiah's public mission. But, let's face it, the prophet Anna was the one whom God called to shatter silence with the word that the Creator had come in the flesh of His creation! □

