



Lesson 9 January 30th, 2021

Prophecying Daughters

Study Scripture – Luke 2:36-38; Acts 2:16-21; 21:8-9

Background Scripture – Luke 2:36-38; Acts 1:12-14; 2:16-21; 21:8-9

Key Verse:

It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

Acts 2:17

INTRODUCTION

A popular song in the sixties declared ‘it’s a man’s world’ and this only confirmed the reality on the ground that existed almost from creation. The subjugation of women is one of the results of sin but was never the intent of God.

Men and women are of equal worth to God though He appointed man to a leadership role. *Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* ([Genesis 2:24](#)).

Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. (Gen. 3:16).

And with regard to salvation: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* (Galatians 3:28).

God’s high regard for women is confirmed by the number of Bible Texts where they are said to prophesy or are called prophetesses. While the contexts of the individual passages show the extent of their activity, to prophesy in its most basic Bible usage, is to speak for or about God in some capacity. While the office of prophet or the activity of prophesying is typically associated with males, one has to be very cautious in assuming that there is a relative rarity of women in that office. The language in both the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament refers both to male prophets and woman prophets, and the language used clearly indicates that this high honour is bestowed on women in both the Old and New Testaments, some of whom are mentioned in our Study Texts.

One should note at the start that there have been many debates about the precise nature of the terms “prophesy”, “prophecy”, “prophet”, and “prophetess” used in the Bible as well as in the ancient near East such as in ancient Mesopotamian and Egypt Texts as well as the Texts from the ancient Levant.

Here are some examples of Bible usage of the word prophesy (Gk. = prophēteuō)

- to be a prophet, speak forth by divine inspirations, to predict
- to prophesy
- with the idea of foretelling future events pertaining esp. to the kingdom of God
- to utter forth, declare, a thing which can only be known by divine revelation
- to break forth under sudden impulse in lofty discourse or praise of the divine counsels
- under like prompting, to teach, refute, reprove, admonish, comfort others
- to act as a prophet, discharge the prophetic office.

It is often noted that in the Hebrew Old Testament numerous prophetic books are named after Israelite and Judean men who are prophets and the names of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Malachi, Hosea, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zechariah, are well-known but there are no prophetic books in the Bible named after woman though there are two books in the Hebrew Bible named after women, Ruth and Esther. But these two women are not referred to as prophets.

Clearly woman prophets in the Bible have often been forgotten, though they have played sterling roles in the history of the nation. We cannot however ignore that the Bible records in 2 Kings 22:14 and 2 Chronicles 34:22 that there was Huldah the prophetess that was considered so gifted that the highest officials in the kingdom of Judah who were all men were commanded by King Josiah to bring the newly discovered “Book of the Law” from the Jerusalem Temple to her for interpretation and that is exactly what the Prophetess Huldah did.

But there were other woman prophets in the Old Testament who were quite exceptional in their work and exercise of the prophetic gift. There was Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Nodiah (Nehemiah 6:), Shemaiah (Nehemiah 6:10), Balaam the false prophet and the unnamed wife of Isaiah (Isaiah 8:3). It is noteworthy that Nodiah was marked as a prophetess, but was labelled a false prophetess, while also Shemaiah was also labelled a false prophet who was hired like Balaam to give false advice, Nehemiah in 6:12-14 also refers to other prophets that were trying to frighten him so we know that there was likely a substantial exercise of the prophetic gift that would have been false.

This idea is important for there is no doubt that there were woman prophets in ancient Israel and in early Christianity. The term used for women prophets is the same for the term used for men prophets and the only difference is the “marker of gender that is the linguistic component of these ancient languages” **both** Hebrew and Greek.

It seems clear that there were often forgotten prophetesses in the Bible whose name we do not know and whose name we never will know. But it seems clear that though God had not created woman to rule and were thus excluded from the Levitical priesthood which was established for a time until a Priest would come after the order of Melchizedek, women were established to minister in things earthly though God had given women what we would regard as a second



place. This place is definitely not an unimportant place, but it is critically important for the success of the nation and the church. As one writer states:

“But in eternal life, the life of Christ in us; in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; in spiritual life and spiritual gifts; neither age nor sex, neither birth nor education, can make any difference. “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s”, in earthly things made earthly distinctions, but in divine things, let divine laws prevailed”.

The issue that this Study might raise however in the light of this is whether or not there is “continuation” in the spiritual gift of prophecy, or whether the prophetic gift has ceased, maybe not forever but certainly for our days. This is a hotly debated and very divisive topic in the modern as well as it was in the ancient church.

We should however note this comment as we look at our topic of Prophesying Daughters which will certainly look at Prophesying Women. One writer states:

“It is quite true that for the sake of order, “the spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Corinthians 14:32). And those the apostle Paul, who had already giving direction to the Corinthians as to the modesty of attire which should distinguish woman who prophesied or prayed (1 Corinthians 11:5-10), further directs that women shall not speak (something quite different from prophecy) in the Church (1 Corinthians 14:44). “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10). “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation and comfort”. (1 Corinthians 14:3). So prophesying was practiced by both men and women in the Old Testament, who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 2:21)”.

There were only 11 women in the Bible named and called prophetesses. Some however would count Hannah as a prophetess (1 Samuel 2).

It is however important to note that there were false men prophets as well as false female prophets. Ezekiel 13 makes this quite clear and in that chapter Ezekiel the prophet condemned the people who built a weak wall and the prophets who covered it with whitewash to make it look strong. God would destroy them. But then the prophets went on to also condemn the false women prophets which obviously were present in those days. He stated:

“Now, human being, reject the woman among your people who make up their own prophecies. Prophecy against them.

Say, ‘This is what the Lord God says: How terrible it will be for women who sew magic charms on their wrists. How terrible it will be for those who make veils of every length. These women do it is to trap people”.

Verses 20 through 23 make it clear what these false woman prophets were doing things outside of the will of God and it tells what God intended to do to them.

We do however have to remind everyone that even though we should make a concerted effort always to remember the often-forgotten prophetesses of the Bible and the great work that they did, we also must remember that there were those that were false and who brought a new message which the gospel did not need. There are also many that have made a radical



departure from the Old Testament definition of prophecy as well as from the church's historic interpretation of the nature of prophecy. So, modified have the definitions been made that we no longer consider them as one writer says, **"always verbal, propositional, infallible, and authoritative"**.

So, the writer states:

"Evidently some believe that the Holy Spirit gave the church a lesser gift consisting in spiritual impressions that are ambiguous and non-authoritative".

The arguments and debates about prophetic Gifts will certainly continue. But it is important to note that the exercise of prophetic gifts do not always have to take place in a church but can be exercised outside the formal assembly of the Church and in the wider community. We note in this regard the example of Agabus who prophesied outside of the formal church assembly to the Apostle Paul about his future.

The Study Texts look at examples of faithful women in the first-century church as recorded by Luke. Analysis of his two books (Luke and Acts) shows that he had special regard for women (Luke 7:11–14; 10:38–42; 13:11–13; Acts 1:14; 16:13; etc.). These Texts and others afford an opportunity to celebrate stories that are sometimes overlooked. These women, named or not, played important roles in the ministry of Jesus that continued in the church. They would be able to prophesy outside of the formal assembly of the Church.

The Jews of Luke's day lived not only in Palestine but also in enclaves of Greek and Roman cities throughout the Empire (Acts 2:5; 6:9; 14:1). Jews maintained their own practices regarding women's roles, as directed by their understanding of Scripture and of family structure from ancient times. In general, a Jewish female was attached to a man who served as her provider, protector and authority. Normally, a father held this role for a daughter and a husband for a wife.

Devout Jews honored God's concern for widows (Deuteronomy 27:19). These often were older women who had no opportunities to remarry or be employed. For them, the likelihood of having a male provider was limited, necessitating help from the community (Acts 6:1–7; James 1:27). Women were allowed to attend synagogue gatherings, but only as observers. They were usually seated in a balcony or in some other section apart from men. The Temple in Jerusalem that was rebuilt after the exile had a courtyard for women, beyond which women were not allowed.

In New Testament times Greek and Roman society was dominated by men at all levels: business, politics, government and military. The primary sphere of influence for Roman women was within the home, where they managed the household and saw to the proper raising of children. The prominence of even a few women in the New Testament accounts is therefore both surprising and instructive.

The first section of Study happens in the aftermath of Jesus' birth as His devout parents carried out the prescribed Levitical rituals (Leviticus 12:2-8) that followed the birth of a male child. The



Law of Moses required the birth mother to undergo purification periods and rites, which would remind the people that they were born in sin. The newborn child would also have to undergo several ceremonies.

After the required eight days, the child Jesus, weaned under the law, was circumcised. Physical circumcision of the male child was a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham. Circumcision was also a symbol of the removal 'of a life lived without God'.

The young parents of Jesus had already encountered some highly unusual experiences tied to the conception and birth of their Son; angelic visitations and God speaking to Joseph in a dream. The weight of caring for the long-awaited Messiah now a baby rested on their shoulders. These divine interventions would continue past His second birthday and the next event would happen when they visited the Temple to dedicate the baby.

At this time the nation was under Roman occupation, the religious and political leaders were corrupt and spiritual darkness pervaded the land. Yet in these dark times God still had His witnesses; faithful and true Israelites who rightly understood God's faithfulness and promises to the nation.

Simeon and Anna were two of this group and their dedication to, hope for and trust in God's promise of a Savior set a very high bar for all Christians who follow. Anna's sacrificial and dedicated life is right there in the annals of the faithful. Let us carefully consider our own commitment to Jesus Christ as we look at the devotion of this often-overlooked daughter.

THE TEXT

(Luke 2:36–38)

When Jesus was eight days old, Joseph and Mary took Him to the Jerusalem Temple to consecrate Him as required by Scripture (Exodus 13:2; Luke 2:21–24). In the Temple courts, the little family encountered two people who were waiting for the Messiah (Luke 2:25, 36). One was a widow named Anna, that we read of below.

Verse 36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser.

Anna is a Greek form of the name Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 1:20). Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving for Samuel (2:1–10) echoes throughout Mary's song of praise (Luke 1:46–55). Luke likely appreciated this further connection to that time past when a longed-for baby boy was born.

... a prophetess ... or a prophet was known for his / her utterances through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Anna therefore must be ranked among those holy women who were the chosen instruments of the Holy Spirit. Her life clearly revealed that she was a true prophetess and God used this older, godly woman who was willing to serve the Lord. God answered her prayers and kept her alive to see the Messiah.



In the Old Testament, some women are called prophetesses including Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), and the unnamed wife of Isaiah (Isaiah 8:3). Though their words are not recorded at length like those of Moses or Jeremiah, these women served by communicating what God revealed to them for the people to hear. Note some with the title prophetess along with their male counterparts were false; e.g., Noadiah, (Nehemiah 6:14) an accomplice of Sanballat and Tobiah, enemies of Nehemiah.

The mention of Anna's father, *Phanuel*, suggests that he was a well-remembered resident of Jerusalem as Luke wrote this account. His name means "face of God," or "presence of God." This implies his religious dedication, a faithfulness that was passed down to his daughter. Fittingly, his daughter would see God face-to-face when she met the baby Jesus.

The tribe of Aser (Asher; see Exodus 1:1–4) was one of the ten northern tribes destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BC. Though many were taken into captivity at that time, others were left behind. Some migrated south to Judah, others became the people known as Samaritans through intermarriage with non-Israelites. Anna's family apparently was left in the land but did not intermarry with other peoples, thus remaining recognizably as being from a tribe. This indicates the tribes had not been lost, and that people in Jesus' time knew their ancestry.

... lived with a husband seven years from her virginity... Luke stresses the importance of virginity in a woman of God. She was a virgin when married and was given a husband by God for only seven years. She was widowed, and was now a widow of eighty-four years, devoting her life to attending in the Temple.

Verse 37. *Fourscore and four years* can refer either to Anna's age (84 years old) or to the approximate amount of time she had been widowed. Either possibility means that she was old enough to remember when the Romans conquered the Jewish homeland in 63 BC.

Which departed not from the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Despite the great corruption of the times, here was a woman who held onto her faith in God, and boldly witnessed in the Temple. Rather than find a new spouse, Anna devoted herself to spiritual service within the Temple. She fasted (probably weekly) and prayed (surely daily). Though she literally may not ever have left *the temple*, more likely the language is meant to emphasize her continual devotion to serving God.

... served God with fastings and prayers night and day ... Her old age did not stop her from performing the duties of her personal ministry in the Temple. Hers' was fasting and prayers, night and day, not departing from the Temple. She was a pious, courageous, and determined person, in whose heart burned the love of God. Her moral sense stands as an example to us.

We are sure that these activities would have annoyed the Temple hierarchy as the lifestyle of the truly faithful often cause discomfort, even among the religious!



This account of Anna should embolden some of us who feel intimidated and are hesitant to stand-up for Jesus. Here was an old and powerful woman of God, who despite her age, remained faithful and unafraid in a male dominated environment. Again, like Simeon, (vs. 25-35) we see that God rewarded her faithfulness by making her see the Messiah.

She like David could say: *“One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple, (Psalm 27:4).*

Verse 38. ... *gave thanks likewise unto the Lord* ... Anna’s words reveal that she had messianic expectations for Jesus (Luke 2:30–32). Like Simeon, she was thankful God had ‘finally’ (Gal. 4:4) sent the Messiah.

... *spoke of him...* the Holy Spirit revealed the Baby’s (Luke 1:31-32) identity to Anna and the fact of His arrival, and its implications would be the subject of her message, (Isa. 52:9).

... *all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem* ... to redeem means to “buy back,” or “deliver from danger” (Leviticus 25:29, 48; Hebrews 9:12). Anna could, like many others, have national politics in mind: redemption would mean that Judea, like Israel of old, would be its own sovereign nation again. However, her pious and devout character; her devotion and commitment suggest spiritual redemption was foremost in her thoughts and in the thoughts of those who looked for redemption.

Jerusalem here likely represents all of Judea.

TEXT

(Acts 2:16–21)

Acts 2 continues the story of Jesus’ followers after His resurrection and ascension. A group of about 120 remained in Jerusalem, including the apostles (minus Judas); Jesus’ brothers; and a group of women that included Mary, Jesus’ mother (Acts 1:14–15).

On Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover, the Holy Spirit descended on this group in spectacular fashion (Acts 2:1–4). This dramatic event drew a diverse crowd as an audience for Peter (2:5–11). It was an ideal setting to explain the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The huge Passover crowd was attracted by the miracle of hearing the ‘Galileans’ speak the *‘wonderful works of God’* in their own languages and asked *“What meaneth this?”* It is in response to this question that Peter preached the first sermon that became a model of apostolic preaching. It was scriptural, Christ-centered, unapologetic and clear.



It is to be noted that the Holy Spirit filled the house but also the 120 disciples. They were baptized in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, the Spirit was poured out on them and they received the Spirit. The manifestation of the Spirit was absolutely clear for the Spirit had rested on each one of them.

Each one therefore participated in praising the mighty work of God and communicating this to the many bystanders.

It is important to note that that the gift of God was not limited or had come only on a few. The Spirit had come on men and women, sons and daughters, old and young, poor and rich, slaves and free, educated and uneducated. The Spirit had come never to leave them.

When we are told that the 120 disciples were praising the mighty works of God, we know that this was based on the fact that they all had already gotten information about Jesus' sacrifice as the Lamb of God who had taken away the sins of the world. They would be praising God the Father for what He had done and praised the Son for what He had done. Their praises would certainly include praising God for fulfilling the prophecies about the coming of Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ, and about prophecies about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, these were prophetic utterances under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for they were spontaneously beginning to speak as Mary the mother of Jesus had spoken when she said:

***My soul exalts the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.***

Verse 16. *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.*

The Apostles, the leaders, were now given an opportunity to prophesy about God the Father's mighty acts of grace, mercy, and salvation, and about the Lord Jesus Christ, what had happened and what would happen, and they stood up. God had spoken in the past and had said exactly what He would do, and it was now done. They first, the Apostles stood up and faced the crowd telling them that the Spirit had manifested Himself. Thus, they should not misinterpret what they were seeing. The 120 were not drunk as some supposed (vs.13) given it was only nine in the morning.

... *this...* refers to the speaking and hearing in the native languages of those gathered (Acts 2:11). By way of explanation, Peter's quotation *spoken by the prophet Joel* that follows comes from Joel 2:28–32.

Verses 17–18. ... *the last days* ... The prophet Joel, about whom we know very little, foresaw 'the day of the Lord' centuries earlier. That day would be a time when God would intervene dramatically in the history of Israel (Joel 2:1) and the whole earth.

The last days refers to the beginning of the final era in God's plan for humanity. We have been in these last days for over two thousand years now (Hebrews 1:1–2; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18). A widespread distribution of God's *Spirit* would be a sign that the new era had dawned.



... *pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh* ... note, the universal element (v. 39). All the old traditional barriers are down in Christ (I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 3:6; Col. 3:11). Although no Jew-Gentile distinction is mentioned in Joel 2, notice v. 38, which imply no distinctions. Yahweh is sharing His Spirit with all humans made in His image ("all flesh"), which is asserted in Gen. 1:26-27.

... *our sons and your daughters* ... Then, lest he be misunderstood, Joel inclusively specified both genders and the spectrum of age groups as conduits for God's communication. Those whom society or culture previously viewed as being ineligible to speak on behalf of God would be empowered to do just that!

Joel's prophecy reveals that God's eligibility criteria are not necessarily what people expect. Peter spoke as if this prophecy was fulfilled, implying that some of the female followers of Jesus already had received this gift. Clearly Pentecost was only a partial though significant fulfilment.

Verses 19–20. ... *wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath* ... the specific *wonders* and *signs* noted here did not occur on the Day of Pentecost. Even so, there were supernatural sounds and visual phenomena that accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2–3). This part of the prophecy likely points ahead to the second coming of Christ (Luke 21:25–28).

Verse 21. *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

...*on the name of the Lord*... refers to the character of Jesus or teachings about Him. It has both the personal and doctrinal element.

... *will be saved*... in this context, this refers to spiritual salvation, while in Joel it probably meant physical deliverance from God's wrath (v. 40). The term 'saved' is generally identified in the Old Testament with physical deliverance. We should note that the prophets were well aware of the spiritual implications of the salvation of Israel so that God's wrath would have a physical as well as a spiritual effect.

But note that Peter's exhortation to the crowd does not indicate that the sons and daughters of God would receive a radically redefined the prophetic gift. This was the work of the Spirit. The transformed sons and daughters of God would continue the prophetic work performed in the Old Testament era.

(Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56; James 5:14,20).

However, in the New Testament salvation was used metaphorically of spiritual salvation or deliverance from God's wrath (James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12).



The events on the Day of Pentecost were not primarily about the miraculous gifting of the Holy Spirit or about the inclusion of both genders in prophetic ministry. The scope of salvation is more than welcoming men and women equally and much more than the ability to prophesy.

Rather, the primary issue is the announcement of salvation to all who *call on the name of the Lord* (Romans 10:9–13). Peter himself did not at this point fully understand the sweeping nature of the word *whosoever*, given his growing understanding in Acts 10:1–11:18. But certainly

Not included in Today's printed Text is the crowd's reaction of asking what they must do and Peter's calling them to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38).

TEXT

Acts 21:8–9

The following brief account occurred near the end of Paul's third missionary journey, in AD 58. Thus, more than two decades had passed since the Day of Pentecost. At the point we join the narrative, Paul and companions were nearing the end of their multi-stop sea voyage.

Verse 8. ... *we that were of Paul's company* ... Luke, the author of this narrative, was a traveling companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14) and was with him at the time of this incident. This is indicated by use of the word 'we'.

In reading of the arrival of *Paul's company ... unto Caesarea*, we take care to observe that this is the coastal city of Caesarea Maritima, not the inland town of Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13; etc.). Caesarea Maritima served as a Roman administrative center and military headquarters. About sixty miles northwest of Jerusalem, this city figures prominently in the book of Acts (Acts 9:30; 10:1, 24; 11:11; 12:19; 18:22; 23:33; etc.).

Philip the evangelist (not to be confused with the apostle Philip) lived in Caesarea. He is one of the "*seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom*" chosen for the ministry described in Acts 6:1–6. He later crossed cultural and racial boundaries to preach the gospel to Samaritans (8:4–25), and then to an Ethiopian eunuch (8:26–40). Philip's home became a way station for Paul as he journeyed to Jerusalem for the final time. It was likely a place of hospitality for other evangelists and Christians.

Verse 9. *Prophesy* - to break forth under sudden impulse in lofty discourse or praise of the divine counsels.

The description of Philip's *four daughters* as *virgins* indicates their status as being unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:34). As such, they lived in their father's house (see Introduction), where Paul was staying. God did not disclose the names or the age of these four virgin daughters of Philip, but it was clearly stated that they were prophetesses of God.



... *did prophesy* ... the four daughters *which did prophesy*, and their evangelist father were likely well-known to Luke's readers and were celebrated as servants among fellow Christians in the area. This may also mean that they served as worship leaders (1 Chron. 25:1). Although this is a reasonable conclusion by inference, nothing further is recorded of Philip and his daughters.

CONCLUSION

An aged widow; a group of women who had followed Jesus and **remained** in Jerusalem after His ascension; a band of four unmarried sisters; the New Testament offers these as examples of first-century women who were endowed with the gift of prophecy as per the contexts.

One can very well ask why God named only four or five of the true prophetesses but named two of the false prophetesses, if one includes the Jezebel of Revelation 2 who lived in Thyatira.

Some believe that it was designed to picture humility. Servants of God have the characteristic of humility, and whether or not they are named it does not really matter. There are enough examples of godly women in Scripture so that we know what God prizes. The false prophetesses are noted so that we can see what false people do.

In the New Heaven and the new Earth, we will know all the true prophetesses of God. We will know their names, the previously hidden names that they have been given by God.

The Holy Spirit distributes gifts and endowments according to His will and men and women are to answer the various and varied calls to ministry. As one observer put it, "When the church is working properly, every woman as well as every man will be using at least one spiritual gift in ministry to others in the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:1–11 and 1 Peter 4:10).

The elect of God will fearlessly do the work of God as evidenced in the Study Texts. As well, those that belong to Christ will always recognize Him, for His sheep hear and know His voice.

The true people of God will witness, proclaim the mighty works of God, exhort, encourage, guide the brethren as directed by the Holy Spirit. May we use the gifts of God as the Spirit directs.

