

# Christ and Gender Roles Women Speaking for God

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# The Case to be Addressed

## Variations on The Question before us:

- Are women ever permitted (by God) to speak out in religious settings?
- Does God ever permit women to teach or instruct men in religious matters?
- Does God ever permit women to hold positions of leadership and/or authority with regard to religious matters?

## How to explore The Question:

- Look through Scripture in detail to find what God has permitted in practice
- Look at specific verses that weigh strongly on the question; square with God's actions

### Peter's difficult Question

**Does God allow the circumcised to fellowship with the uncircumcised?**

- (A) The common understanding from the law of Moses was, "No"
- (B) Peter received a prophetic vision that he later understood as, "Yes"
- (C) God acted to demonstrate his approval with holy spirit on Cornelius

**God's actions were taken as definitive by the apostles in the council at Jerusalem**

# Prophets: Speaking out on behalf of God

A prophet was primarily about forth-telling (speaking out) the message from God, rather than fore-telling (speaking the future)

- To explain, instruct, exhort, encourage, demand, warn, condemn...

[2Chr 15:7–8](#) “But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.”

As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols..., and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD.

- Not by personal choice, but by the Spirit

[2Pet 1:20-21](#) First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. [NRSV]

- The character and personality of the prophet also shows through

Most prophets mentioned in Scripture were men, but there were also many women...

# OT Prophets: Miriam

**Ex. 15:20** Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.

(Young's Literal) And Miriam the inspired one, sister of Aaron...

**Num 12:1** While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married... and they said, "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?"

Miriam was punished for speaking against Moses (became leprous for a week)

Aaron was not equally afflicted – we are not told why (High Priest?)

God spoke to the new nation primarily through the prophet Moses...  
... but also through the prophets Miriam and Aaron

# OT Prophets: Deborah

- Deborah was a Prophet and also the Judge of tribal Israel

[Judg 4:4-6](#) At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment.

She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, ‘Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun.’”

- Barak’s trust in her message is listed as an example of faith

[Heb 11:32-33](#) And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

The only other Prophet-Judge is Samuel

# OT Prophets: Hannah's Psalm

**1Sam 2** Hannah prayed and said,

My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory.

There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and on them he has set the world.

He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed.

# OT Prophets: Lemuel's Mother

**Prov 31:1-31** The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him:

What are you doing, my son?... Do not give your strength to women, your ways to those who destroy kings.

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine... lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to the one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.

Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain... Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

This oracle is written in Scripture so that we can all benefit from her wisdom

# OT Prophets: Huldah

**2Kings 22:11-20** When [Josiah] the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary, and the king's servant Asaiah, saying,

“Go, inquire of the LORD for me... for great is the wrath of the LORD... because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”

So [they all] went to the prophetess Huldah the wife of Shallum...; she resided in Jerusalem... where they consulted her. She declared to them,

“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, Thus says the LORD, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants... Because they have abandoned me... my wrath will be kindled against this place...

“But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ... because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself... I also have heard you, says the LORD. Therefore... you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place.”

They took the message back to the king.

# NT Prophets: around the birth of Jesus

**Luke 1:41-45** When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb... And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

**Luke 2:36-38** There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age... eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

# NT Prophets: The Prophecy of Mary

Luke 1:46

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

# First Witnesses

- [Matt 28:5-10](#) But the angel said to the women  
“Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.”  
So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.  
Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them,  
“Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”
- Context: women were not considered valid witnesses by contemporary Judaic society
- Josephus, Antiquities 4.219 ... let not a single witness be credited; but three, or two at the least... But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex; nor let servants be admitted to give testimony, on account of the ignobility of their soul;...
- [Luke 24:9-12](#) Returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

God chose women to be the first witnesses of the resurrection

# NT Prophets: Pentecost (Jerusalem)

**Acts 2:2-4** And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

**Acts 2:15-18** Indeed, these are not drunk... No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out 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. Even upon my servants, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.'

Both men and women were prophets in the first century church

# NT Prophets: Corinth

**1Cor 11:4-5** Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.

Context: Discussing church meetings with regard to communion and gifts of tongues and prophecy

**1Cor 10:16** Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

**1Cor 11:18** In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you...

**1Cor 14:14, 22** if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful... Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers.

**1Cor 14:26-31** When you come together, each of you has a hymn... a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation... Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.

First century sisters prayed and prophesied at the agape meal

# NT Prophets: Caesarea

**Acts 21:8-9** On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.

- What was the nature of their prophecy?
- Context: Paul traveling from Greece to Jerusalem

**Acts 20:22-23** [Ephesus] ... compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem,... in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

**Acts 21:3-5** [Tyre] Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

**Acts 21:10-12** [Caesarea] Agabus ... took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

Philip's daughters likely prophesied to Paul about his imprisonment

# Summary: What God has permitted in practice

Review of The Question(s) before us:

- Are women ever permitted (by God) to speak out in religious settings?
- Does God ever permit women to teach or instruct men in religious matters?
- Does God ever permit women to hold positions of leadership and/or authority with regard to religious matters?

Next we will look at the specific verses that weigh strongly on the question; understand how they square with God's actions...

Throughout history many women have been selected by God to speak out for him as prophets, leaders, witnesses,...

Joel twice explicitly foretold spirit-gifted women prophets

Paul asserts that prophecy is a vocal gift for building up believers to be exercised in ecclesia

Women had vocal roles within 1st Century ecclesial meetings

The apostles understood that gifts of the spirit demonstrate God's will beyond the narrow confines of the gift