

Where did the virgin daughters prophesy?

Act 21:9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

I have taken up the doctrine of prophecy upon many occasions, and have attempted to expound it's meaning as one of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is the second highest order of Spirit-gift that exists (1Cor.12:28; Eph. 4:11-12). Only Apostles are higher, and they are all in heaven (Matt. 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rev. 4: 4; Rev. 11:16; Rev. 20:4). So this leaves prophecy as the highest miraculous gift still extant in the church here on earth.

Prophecy is not Preaching

Prophecy is not to be confused with preaching or with the office of a pastor. Many cessationists have redefined it so that it means forth-telling or ordinary preaching or teaching. This is because they are afraid of any extra-Biblical revelation.¹ It may contain elements of forth-telling, but it is actually more concerned with fore-telling future events. That prophecy is more than preaching is clear from Acts. 19:6.

The Greek word προφητεύω (prophēteuō) means to foretell events. It is actually very specific. The Jonathan Mitchell New Testament is consistent in it's translation of this word. He translates it "prophesying", with these words of explanation added: "speaking light ahead of time and in front of people". That is actually an excellent definition of prophecy...SPEAKING LIGHT AHEAD OF TIME AND IN FRONT OF PEOPLE. If you apply that definition in the various instances of the word you will come very close to fully understanding what the Holy Spirit intended by the word prophecy.

Prophecy More Prevalent in N.T.

One of the unique features of this prophetic gift, is that it was to be even more operational in the New Testament than in the Old.

This is clear by Joel's prophecy:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams,

¹ See my study on the gift of prophecy. Prophecy is a revelational gift which is concerned with discerning the will of God in areas where there are no scriptures. It is part of the Holy Spirit's gifts to guide His people into all truth (Jn. 16: 13; Jn 14: 26; 1Cor. 2: 10-13; 1Jn.2: 20,27). Prophets were given "for the edification of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12; 1Cor. 14:3).

your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit (Joel 2:28-29),

and by it's fulfillment on Pentecost:

“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And 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: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy (Acts 2: 16-18).

Another characteristic of the gift of prophecy, is that it is bestowed on men and women alike. Note: the words “Daughters” and “Handmaids”. There is an important passage in 1Corinthians 11 about women “praying and prophesying”. “But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven” (1Cor. 11:5). This shows that women were prophesying in the church at Corinth. Paul is indicating that when they do prophesy, they should do so with covered heads.

Women's Lib at Corinth

Now there is extensive discussion about the nature of the head covering, but context seems to indicate that the natural covering of the woman's head is her hair (11:15), and that the issue being discussed by Paul is women who are shorn or shaven (v.6), or who's hair has been cut. The hair is the natural veil on a woman's head. Paul says it is her “glory”. Shorn female heads were a sign to the Jews that a woman was an convicted adulterer or a whore, or a sign of mourning. But some have speculated, and with some validity, that there was a sort of woman's lib movement in the Corinthian church, where woman shaved their heads as a protest against any form of subjection of women to men, and used the shaved head as a symbol of gender equality and women's liberation from subservience to men. This movement also apparently found expression by woman using excessive speech in the assemblies. They would blurt out in tongues, in a disruptive fashion. They would try to preach and teach, and usurp the male authorized role in the assembly (1Tim. 2:12). And some would even “prophesy with their heads uncovered”. Surely the women who had the gift of prophesy should have known better than to be a part of this women's lib movement.

The normal church, functioned like the normal synagogue, and women rarely spoke. Thus Paul lays down a very stringent injunction for the Corinthian church. He commands: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (1Cor. 14:34-35). This is meant to be a corrective, and to bring the Corinthians back to the modicum of order as established for the synagogues and churches. Normal order and decency

required that women would generally be silent. So Paul was putting His foot down on the women who were out of order in Corinth, and he was legislating numerous changes for Corinth to bring it back to the norm which says “All things must be done decently and in order” (1Cor. 14:40).

The Jezebel Prophets

When we read the letters to the churches in Revelation, we are to understand that these were real, functioning churches which Jesus addressed in these seven letters through the Apostle John. When we come to the church at Thyatira we read a very important injunction against her.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works (Rev. 2:20-23)

Thyatira’s biggest problem came from a woman who claimed to be a prophetess, one who had the gift of prophecy. Apparently she had been accepted into the church as a genuine prophet. She was actively prophesying within that body, when she begin teaching people that sexual impurity normal and should be practiced. This was obviously brought in from the pagan goddess in their local temple.


This event is recorded by the Holy Spirit and is important to this discussion for several reasons.

- 1). It is normal to expect that at least some women are genuine prophetesses. Obviously they expected it at Thyatira, and they let this women prophesy. Women were prophesying at Corinth under the same sort of normal expectation.
- 2). Apparently Thyatira did not follow Paul’s rule governing prophets, which states that all prophets are to be screened by the existing prophets and their spirits are to be subject unto them.

“For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints (1Cor. 14:31-33).

In other words Prophets are a self-policing and self-regulating body. (They even had a school in the Old Testament). It would seem then, that if you had a prophecy that needed to be uttered, it required approval from the chief prophets, or the established and proven prophets who were in charge. It was not a matter

of letting anyone and everyone blurt out prophecies, simply because they thought that they had the gift. Prophecy is a very controlled function, and the true prophets always controlled where and when and how a given prophecy was to be uttered. They always maintained control of their own tongue. This gift is carefully regulated by the instructions that the Holy Spirit gave through Paul. Regulation is the only means to prevent Jezebel prophets in the churches. False prophecy is never acceptable, thus the harsh judgment on the Jezebel prophet at Thyatira. False prophets were killed under the Old Testament. This shows that prophetic content must be 100% accurate. Prophets cannot make mistakes when prophesying. It was not permitted in the Old Testament, and it is not permitted in the New Testament.



A person like Benny Hinn who repeatedly makes false prophecies, one after another, would have been stoned in Bible times. I'm not advocating that we do that sort of thing today, but we certainly should not follow false prophets or allow them to utter their evil lying words in our churches.

True Prophecy vs. Pagan Prophecy

The Jezebel prophetess at Thyatira illustrates that there are clear and recognizable differences between Pagan false prophets and Holy true prophets. Much of the differences are explained by the source of the prophecies. When pagan false prophets speak, they are orchestrated, motivated and controlled by demons. I am not saying that they are always possessed by demons. I am simply saying that their prophesying is always demon influenced and demon activated. The Holy Spirit utters only truth. 100% accuracy is the only standard for prophets.

Because of what Paul taught about “the spirits of the prophets being subject to the prophets” we must ask ourselves what this meant and how it should be implemented today.

First of all let me say this...

The true and holy prophets of God always control their inclinations to speak.

This is a vitally important and scriptural element of the gift of prophecy. Even

though their speech was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they were never compelled to speak as if a necessity for immediate utterance was given. The Holy Spirit does not remove their self-control or free agency. The true prophet is a model of decency and order. He controls what he says under the operation of prophetic gift just as he controls what he says when the gift is not operating. The Holy Spirit's method of operation is never like the pagan demonic method.

The pagan demonic method (which operates on false prophets) always involves the prophet's loss of self control.

This is very important. Please take careful note this. False prophets, because they are motivated by demons, cannot control what they say, when they say it or how they say it. **They are in a trance like state, even though they may not realize it.** This is always the way demons work. They take away the self-control of the individual. This is a bogus attempt at sovereign control over their dupes. Eventually these people will actually become possessed. The Holy Spirit never takes away His subjects ability to control themselves.

They had control over their own minds, and could speak or be silent at pleasure. In this the spirit of true inspiration differed essentially from the views of the pagan, who regarded themselves as driven on by a wild, controlling influence, that compelled them to speak even when they were unconscious of what they said. Universally, in the pagan world, the priests and priestesses supposed or feigned that they were under an influence which was uncontrollable; which took away their powers of self-command, and which made them the mere organs or unconscious instruments of communicating the will of the gods. The Scripture account of inspiration is, however, a very different thing. In whatever way the mind was influenced, or whatever was the mode in which the truth was conveyed, yet it was not such as to destroy the conscious powers of free agency, nor such as to destroy the individuality of the inspired person, or to annihilate what was special in his mode of thinking, his style, or his customary manner of expression. ALBERT BARNES

False Prophecy is Related to Divination, Necromancy, Astrology, Witchcraft, and Fortune Telling

There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: (Deut. 18:10-12a)

There is one interesting thing about the final judgment, that is seldom mentioned or considered, and it concerns false prophets. Jesus said: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22-23). The

false prophets will make a plea in the end, based upon their prophesying. They truly believe that they were prophesying in the name and under the authority of Christ. That shows how subtle and serious the self-deception is that marks these false prophets. This is why assuming the role of a prophet, when you are not a genuine prophet, is equal to the worse forms of conjuring, divination, witchcraft etc. This is very serious and dangerous stuff. Beware, if you are thinking that you have a prophetic gift. Self-deception at this point has eternal consequences.

The Babylonian Wizardry

There is a record of Nebuchadnezzar's wizardry and Babylonian divination after the Battle of Carchemish, when he was trying to decide if he should continue to pursue the Egyptians, or turn aside and conquer Jerusalem.

For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made *his* arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint *battering* rams against the gates, to cast a mount, *and* to build a fort (Ezk. 21:21-22)

I just want to mention in passing that this indicates that Nebuchadnezzar used at least three forms of divination on this occasion...Belomancy (arrows fired into the air), Theraphim (images), and Hepatic Dissection (liver reading). All of these methods involve demonic activity. All are closely related to false prophecy, because they are methods of discerning the future.

Croesus and Delphi

The ancient historian Herodotus records the case of Croesus king of Lydia in Sardis and his consultation with every major oracle of the ancient world, when he was trying to discern what to do about Cyrus the great who threatened his kingdom. He set up a test, to determine the best oracle. On a certain day, at a certain time he boiled a turtle and a lamb in a brass large pot. His ambassadors were, at that time, to entreat all the famous fortune tellers, prophets and oracles of the ancient world, to see if they could tell what he was doing. None of them succeeded except the oracle at Delphi. Pithia, the demon possessed priestess at Delphi responded:

I can count the sands, and I can measure the ocean; I have ears for the silent and know what the dumb man meaneth; Lo! On my sense there striketh the smell of a shell-covered tortoise boiling now on a fire, with the flesh of a lamb, in a cauldron, brass is the vessel below, and brass is the cover over it²

² Herodotus, The Persian Wars, Bk. 1, translated by George Rawlinson, Random House 1942, pg.25

This clearly shows the power and surprising accuracy of demon inspired speech. Beware and be very careful, because this is closely related to false prophecy. Croesus later consulted the oracle again, and this time it resulted in the destruction of his own empire! Croesus fell because of his trust in false prophecy. There are many historical accounts similar to this, you might want to check out the case of the Emperor Trajan who made a similar request at the oracle of Heliopolis.

Whenever false prophecy takes place, whether in church, or at the hands of a fortune-teller, palm-reader, crystal-ball gazer, tea-leave reader, new age witch, or through a Ouija board; demons are at work and are in control. This is dangerous stuff.

What does this have to do with the women prophets of the New Testament?

We titled this study “Where did the Virgin Prophets Prophecy?” because we wanted to discuss the role of women prophets in the church, especially in relation to Paul’s commands for women to keep silent in the church. Paul was clearly pointing out the abuses of false women prophets in Corinth, women who had been carried away from the truth. Careful consideration of the praxis of the Corinthian church, shows that women were permitted to prophesy there just like at Thyatira and at all the rest of the churches throughout Christendom. The difference being that they were not properly regulated. Women prophets are no different than men prophets. They are subject to the governance of the senior prophets, or the prophetic body. They are in subjection to one another.³

Their subjection to the other prophets, it must be pointed out, is not after a prophecy has been spoken, but before. In other words, the prophetic content is determined to be true before the prophecy is uttered in the assembly. Let me repeat that so you do not miss it. **THE PROPHETIC CONTENT IS DETERMINED TO BE TRUE BEFORE THE PROPHECY IS UTTERED IN THE ASSEMBLY.**

So this is how the women prophets would be permitted to speak without violating Paul’s demand for women to keep silence (1Cor. 14:34-40; 1Tit. 2:8-15). They would speak by pre-arranged permission of the overseeing prophets, according to a schema or order of worship which would be decent and in order. They would not be allowed to speak if their heads were uncovered (*hair cut like a*

³ In the absence of other prophets, we would say based upon inferral and extension from other scriptures that they would be subject to the pastors and elders of the churches, who are the spiritual overseers of the churches. See Acts 20:28; 1Tim. 5:17; Tit. 1:5-7; 1Pet. 5:1-2. Many scholars believe that all pastor’s have the gift of prophecy, as well as the other revelatory gifts. Although no passage specifically says this it is a very likely concept given the duties and responsibilities of pastors to “oversee” the churches.

man's), indicating that they were women's libbers, or in some kind of rebellion against the male authority structure of the church. This was how the women prophets could speak in the churches without usurping the male authority.

The role of the prophet is a very important role in the church. It is a role ordained by God, and it is a role governed by God. Man or woman, both kinds of prophets are subject to the authority of the prophetic body oversight. Where did Phillip's virgin daughters prophesy? Why in church, of course. Where should women prophets prophesy today? In church, of course.

By way of conclusion, let me give a word of advice to anyone who coveting the best gifts (1Cor. 12:31), and desiring to prophesy (1Co. 14:1). Do not rush blindly into this, but seek it with great prayer and thoughtful intensity of spirit. Consult with your pastors, or with other people who clearly have the genuine gift of prophecy. Remember the prophetic gift is never wrong. 100% accuracy is the only acceptable standard for prophecy. So be careful. If you think you have a prophecy, then run it by those in authority, before you blurt it out in church, you cannot afford to be wrong. That hurts the kingdom of God. It brings ridicule on the head of Jesus Christ. It turns the Holy Spirit into something less than God, because God cannot make mistakes. Please be very careful and prayerful. If it proves to be that you have this marvelous and miraculous gift, then you have the highest and best gift currently available in the church of God. Use it wisely. Control it intently and spiritually. Use it for the edification of the body, and never for your own self-puffery. Virgin daughter prophets wherever you are...speak and the whole world will listen. But please, please do it, according to God's revealed truth.

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