

January 31, 2021

“Called to Prophecy”  
Lesson 1 of Unit

Luke 2:36-38, Acts 2:16-21,  
Acts 21:8-9

### **Intro**

Today starts the third and last theme of our winter quarter study, “Call in the New Testament.” The theme of this unit is “The Call of Women.” Each lesson will look at various women who were called to do some action for Jesus and the Kingdom.

Today’s first lesson uses three passages of Scripture showing women who were called to prophesy in the New Testament. To prophesy (with an “s”) is a verb, meaning to speak or instruct from a place of divine inspiration, frequently but not always as a prediction or foreshadowing of what is to come. Prophecy (with a “c”) is a noun, the thing which is said. A prophet is someone who prophesies a prophecy. This person has been chosen by God to speak for Him about some specific topic or idea.

### **Read Luke 2:36-38**

1. vs. 36:

Anna is identified by Luke here as a prophet or prophetess

4 women in OT are called prophetesses

Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), the unidentified wife of Isaiah (Is. 8:3)

Not as common for a woman to be a prophet, but not unheard of either

All of them communicated what God revealed to them for the people to hear

Anna is identified as the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher

Penuel means “face of God” or “presence of God”

Suggests that he was faithful and dedicated, and passed these qualities on to Anna

Asher was one of the 10 Northern tribes destroyed by the Assyrian invasion in 722 BC

Some people from these tribes were left in the land and not carried away

Anna’s family appears to have been left, and to have maintained their godliness

2. vs. 36-37:

She is likely 84 years old, not a widow for 84 years

She was only married for 7 years before being widowed

If she married at a typical age (14-16), she has been a widow for roughly 60 years

“She never left the temple”

Two possibilities here

1) She had an apartment somewhere on the temple grounds and was always around

2) She was always at every service and time of prayer in the temple

Either way, this indicates her devotion to God through her life of service

3. vs. 38: She comes upon Mary, Joseph, and Jesus just as Simeon is speaking his praise (2:28-35)  
Anna adds her own words of prophecy  
Jesus is the one who will bring about the “redemption of Israel”  
She definitely sees Jesus in Messianic terms  
She doesn’t seem to know any more than this about Jesus  
God allows her to see and do her part, but not more than that

## Read Acts 2:16-21

1. vs. 16:

The “this” that Peter uses is referring to what happened in 2:1-12  
The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit  
They began speaking in various different languages so all understood their words  
This was a work of God to reach people no matter where they were from  
Peter identifies this miracle as the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32

2. vs. 17-18:

“The last days” refers to the last era in God’s plan for humanity  
We have been in the era for roughly the last 2000 years  
Joel’s prophecy notes that in these last days God would pour His Spirit out  
This has just happened on Pentecost, a sign that the new era has begun  
In these “last days”, who will be allowed to speak what God has said?  
Joel lists several groups that would not have been allowed to prior to “the last days”  
“all flesh”—this implies Gentiles as well as Jews  
“sons and daughters”—this refers to youth, not the elders  
“daughters”—shows that women will have a voice for God  
“young men / old men”—shows that all ages will have a voice for God  
“male servants and female servants”—shows that all social classes will be used by  
God, not just the leaders / masters  
--again shows that women as well as men will be used as God’s voice

God often does things in a way that isn’t what people expect, or believe is how it should be done  
These groups fit in with God’s way of doing what He wants how He wants, regardless of what we  
think of His method

3. vs. 19-20:

“The Day of the Lord” (vs. 20) seems to have at least two times of fulfillment  
Day of Pentecost: there were “signs on the earth below”  
Mighty rushing wind sound (2:2)  
Tongues of fire on each of the apostles (2:3)  
Some future day(s)—perhaps Jesus’ Second Coming  
“blood and fire and billows of smoke” – didn’t happen on Pentecost  
“sun will be turned to darkness”—did happen at the crucifixion...  
“the moon to blood” – didn’t happen on Pentecost  
These will happen before or on the “Day of the Lord”

4. vs. 21:

The most important aspect of this prophecy

All the things that will happen lead to salvation

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”

Interestingly, after Peter’s sermon, He is asked by the people, “What shall we do?”

They are asking “What do we need to do to be saved?”

### **Read Acts 21:8-9**

1. vs. 8:

Luke’s account of a stop on one of Paul’s journeys

Philip is identified

One of the Seven

Ones chosen in Acts 6 as “full of the Spirit and wisdom”, chosen for a ministry

He is described as “the evangelist”

Preaches to Samaritans (8:4-25)

Explains gospel to Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40)

2. vs.9:

Philip’s four daughters

Unmarried is the same as virgins

Lived with their father as was Jewish custom at the time

They are prophets

They are likely known to the Christian community Luke is writing to

They are referred to only in this passage

Their names are not given—seems to suggest all will know them

They prophesy regularly

Must do something regularly to get that description

No one is called a mechanic who fixes one car one time

Application: This lesson has given three examples of women endowed by God with the gift of prophecy: an aged widow, a group of women who follow Jesus, a band of unmarried sisters. This lesson has two applications. First, everyone should use their gift, whatever it is, to answer God’s call on their lives to minister. Second, women from the beginning of the New Testament era had significant roles in delivering God’s word to fellow believers.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for the ministries you have given to each of us. We think today of the examples of these three groups of women who served you in their roles as prophetesses. Help us to be as faithful with our gifts as they were with theirs. In Jesus’ name, Amen.