

In Support of Women's Ordination.

Defining a prophet:

- From the Oxford dictionary: "(in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim religions) a person sent by God to teach the people and give them messages from God"
- From the Cambridge dictionary: a person who is believed to have a special power that allows them to say what a God wishes to tell people, especially about things that will happen in the future.

Biblically female prophets and priestesses are evident.

Deborah

Book of Judges (4:4-5) ⁴ Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time...the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.

She was prominent in leading armies for God's glory and directed according to when she received the message from God. (Judges 4:9-11,14) "Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honour will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." ... ¹⁴ Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?"

Remember **Esther**.

Huldah – 2 Kings 22:14- another female prophet is mentioned- in which her esteemed counsel is sought out by a priest Hilkiah

¹⁴ Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum

... and she gives direct reference to speaking the Word of God to them... (verse 15a) ¹⁵ She said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me..."

In the New Testament

Anna spending most of her life in the Temple – Luke 2. 36ff – "... (Anna) and spoke about the child to all who were waiting for God to set Jerusalem free."

Women are often mentioned in equal standing amongst Jesus disciples. **Joanna, Susanna and Mary Magdalene** are all prominently named in the bible – much like many of the male disciples.

Righteous **Salome**- wife of Zebedee (Matt 27:56), mother of James and John (Matt 4:21). Salome is later referenced being with Mary Magdalene, and other Mary (mother of James and Joseph) standing from a distance at the Cross (Mark 15:40). The believed tomb of Salome refers to Holy Salome ([WEBLINK](#)).

Furthermore it was to Mary, Joanna, and other women that Christ's resurrection was first revealed (Luke 24) – it was these women who FIRST proclaimed this good news to the apostles (Luke 24:10), upon which the men did not believe them (verse 11). That is they were God's messengers.

Galatians 3:26-28: We are all one in Christ, why should we hold male ministry above the potential power of female ministry?

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In the Bible, prophecy and proclamation is clearly a gender-neutral gift of the Spirit. "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy." (1 Corinthians 14:1). Why does human kind make a difference when Christ absolutely nowhere makes a distinction?

And in Acts – women are mentioned as being in the ministry – **Priscilla, Damaris**.

Matthew 28 18-19: Is Jesus only speaking to the male of the species? Note- it does say to all of us. "Baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." If this is only for the male of the species, why do women teach Sunday School? Why do mothers teach their male children?

Evidence outside of direct biblical passages

In frescos and iconography within the catacombs- women were equally prominent in 'statue' with Jesus alongside the men, however by 2nd Centenary – women are portrayed 'behind' Jesus (often side-by-side with male disciples). From the first century, women are standing beside Christ and the men, by the third century, women are standing back in the shadows and by the fifth century women are relegated as 'grovelling' at Jesus feet.

The fifth century fresco of Bishop **Cerula** in the Italian catacombs, depicts the woman, Cerula, with two open bibles – symbolic of a Bishop, evidence that women were bishops in the 5th century ([WEBLINK](#)).

In 495 Pope Gelasius I (492-496) writes to Southern Italy stating women should not minister at the holy altar... essentially banning female bishops and priests from the 6th century ([WEBLINK](#)). There are many other instances in the Arts of women in high office. Sadly, by the end of the 6th Century women were relegated to 2nd rate citizens.

The thing that worries me most about the current attitude in the LCA NZ is that males are telling us that they know better than our Lord who should receive what gifts given by the Holy Spirit. It is time we stopped 'playing' God and let the Holy Spirit shine no matter what the gender of we humans. I for one did not receive that gift, but it pains me to know others who were given the gift of Ministry and have struggled all their lives to live under the bondage imposed by the 'doctrines' of the LCA NZ.

Finally, when the 10 Commandments were issued to Moses, there is no statement or inference that women are not considered as equal as men in God's command (Exodus 20), and Jesus, our Lord, summarised those commandments in the words found in Matthew 22: 37 -39 'Jesus said " You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.'" Everything in the Bible must be followed and interpreted in the light of these two commands. These commands speak to all of us.

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