



FEMALE ELDERS / PASTORS (PART 1)

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

- ❑ Last time we looked at the qualifications for elders and their duties. But what about female elders?
- We saw previously that there was a strong Scriptural case for the appointment of deaconesses.
- But does the same apply to elders? Many believe that while women can serve as deacons, they are not to be appointed as elders/pastors, should not teach and must not exercise any authority over a man.



THE ROLE OF WOMEN

- ❑ Catholic, Orthodox and the Eastern churches are steadfast in their refusal to allow women into the clergy, as indeed, are many Protestant churches.
- ❑ What is the A/G (US) position?
 - Women's role in ministry: The A/G affirms the ministry of women in the church and allows them to be ordained and serve in pastoral roles.¹

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assemblies_of_God_USA

US CHURCHES THAT ORDAIN WOMEN

YES <i>Group generally allows ordination of women</i>	NO <i>Group generally does not allow ordination of women</i>
Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church of God American Baptist Church United Methodist Church Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Presbyterian Church (USA) Episcopal Church African Methodist Episcopal Disciples of Christ United Church of Christ	Southern Baptist Convention Roman Catholic Church Missouri Synod Lutheran Church Orthodox Church In America

SOURCE: Pew Research Centre, Pentecostal Church of God, General Council of the Assemblies of God, New York Times, Disciples of Christ

LIBERAL CAPITULATION?

- ❑ George Wood (A/G US) poses the question:
 - Have we capitulated to the liberal culture by credentialing 5,225 women of our 32,304 credentialed ministers (16.17%), and by having 387 women pastors among our 12,055 churches (3.21%)? ¹
- ❑ Some attempt to draw analogies between appointing woman pastors/ elders and the ordination of gays, claiming that we are simply caving in to pressure from a modern liberal society.
- ❑ This is not true. Homosexuality is a sin (1 Cor 6:9). Being a woman is not. One can find numerous cases of women operating in this role in the Bible and Church history. The same cannot be said about homosexuals.

¹ http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/008_exploring.cfm

THE LAST DAYS

- ❑ On the Day of Pentecost, Peter saw in the event the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28.



In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your **sons and daughters will prophesy**... Even on my servants, **both men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:16-18 NIV)

- ❑ Pentecostals believe that while this outpouring of the Spirit on both men and women applied in the Apostolic Age, it has a special and more complete fulfilment in the Pentecostal movement spawned in the early 20th century.

PAUL AND WOMEN

- ❑ Last time we saw the prominent role of women in the OT, Jesus' ministry and the missionary work of Paul.
- ❑ We'll see next time that women often hosted house churches.
- ❑ So it is clear that women were actively involved in the work of the early church. But did they hold any office in the church?

APOSTLES

- ❑ Well consider Junia, who was identified by Paul as an apostle.
 - Romans 16:7 (NIV) Greet Andronicus and **Junia**, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are **outstanding among the apostles**, and they were in Christ before I was.
- ❑ While some English Bible versions have attempted to transform her into a man, most Bible scholars agree that Junia is a Latin female name.



APOSTLES

- ❑ No instances of Junias (the masculine form of the name) have surfaced to date in ancient Greco-Roman literature. Nor is there any evidence proving that Junias was ever a contracted form of a longer name.
- Multiple database searches found the female name in use in Ephesus, Didyma, Lydia, Troas, Bithynia and Rome during the first century, but not one reference to the masculine form, Junias.¹
- Meanwhile, the Latin name Junia is attested multiple times on inscriptions, tombstones and records; most notably, the half sister, Junia Secunda, of Marcus Junius Brutus.²

¹ Rena Pederson - The Lost Apostle, page 164

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junia_\(New_Testament_person\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junia_(New_Testament_person))

APOSTLES

- According to many scholars, Junia was a common name that appeared in Greek and Latin inscriptions and literature. Brooten states, "the female Latin name Junia occurs over 250 times among inscriptions from ancient Rome alone." Peter Lampe has also discovered over 250 examples of the female name Junia. Bruce Metzger, editor of the GNT, likewise agrees that Junia is well attested to in ancient literature.¹

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junia_\(New_Testament_person\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junia_(New_Testament_person))

APOSTLES

- ❑ According to the A/G US Position Paper on “The role of women in ministry”:
 - Beginning in the thirteenth century, a number of scholars and translators **masculinized her name** to Junias, **apparently unwilling to admit that there was a female apostle**. However, the name Junia is found more than 250 times in Rome alone, while the masculine form Junias is unknown in any Greco-Roman source... These instances of women filling leadership roles in the Bible should be taken as a **divinely approved pattern, not as exceptions** to divine decrees. Even a limited number of women with scripturally commended leadership roles affirm that God does indeed call women to spiritual leadership.¹

¹ <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/The-Role-of-Women-in-Ministry>

APOSTLES

- ❑ In commenting on Romans 16:7, John Chrysostom (347-407) states:
 - Greet Andronicus and Junia... who are outstanding among the apostles: To be an apostle is something great! But to be outstanding among the apostles - just think what a wonderful song of praise that is! They were outstanding on the basis of their works and virtuous actions. Indeed, **how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle.**
- ❑ The female identity of Junia was accepted without objection during the first 12 centuries of the Orthodox church, according to the writings of the church fathers. ¹

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junia_\(New_Testament_person\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junia_(New_Testament_person))

APOSTLES

- ❑ Bauckham makes a strong case that not only is this word-noun-name feminine, but also that it is the Latinized version of Joanna (one of Jesus' traveling companions / disciples—cf Luke 8.3 and 24.10)! Joanna was the wife of Herod's steward, and would have had a Latin/Roman name for purposes of administration. This identification would make the most sense of the name, her relation to Rome, her being 'in Christ' before Paul, and of her apostolic status (as a witness of Jesus' deeds and resurrection—Acts 1).¹

¹ <http://christianthinktank.com/fem08.html>

APOSTLES

- ❑ An apostle, in its most literal sense, is an emissary, from Greek ἀπόστολος (apóstolos), literally "one who is sent off". The purpose of such sending off is usually to convey a message, and thus "messenger" is a common alternative translation; other common translations include "ambassador" and "envoy".
- ❑ So an apostle was a person "sent" with a mission and message. They spoke with the authority of their sender. Junia was not only an apostle, but "outstanding among the apostles". Apostles were the most authoritative messengers of God. Elders were initially appointed by apostles. So how could a woman be an apostle, yet a woman could not be an elder/overseer/pastor?

APOSTLES

- ❑ Yet in the early church it is true that men were more likely to be elders/overseers than women.
 - It is claimed that the appointment of only men among the Twelve Apostles indicates Jesus was limiting women in ministry. However, this is flawed. None of the Twelve was a Gentile. Are we to argue that Jesus limited ministry only to Jews? ¹
- ❑ But why were there so few women leaders, relatively speaking?

¹ <https://nzchristiannetwork.org.nz/should-women-lead-churches-and-preach>

APOSTLES

- ❑ In a culture that was generally hostile to female leaders and less receptive to a women's testimony, it would have been more difficult for women to be effective, especially in ministry to men. We see how the women do not fare too well with their report to the disciples about the empty tomb.
- Luke 24:9-11 (NIV) When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But **they did not believe the women**, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

APOSTLES

- ❑ Later in the day, Peter and John do not believe Mary Magdalene about the resurrection.
 - Mark 16:10-11 (NIV) She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, **they did not believe it.**
- ❑ Now the Bible instructs us to be sensitive to cultural and social norms in order to be more effective in our evangelisation and mission work (1 Cor 9:20-22).

APOSTLES

- 1 Cor 9:20-22 (NIV) To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law ... so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law ... so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.
- ❑ Even today we have to be sensitive to different cultures and for instance, it might be difficult (or impossible) to use women missionaries to men in certain areas.
- ❑ But we have no such restriction (or comparatively little) regarding women in our Western culture - and neither should we.

APOSTLE-MISSIONARIES

- ❑ Jesus instructed the apostles to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-18). This verse is referred to by Christians as the Great Commission and is the inspiration for missionary work.
- ❑ While the A/G (US) does not recognize titles or offices of "apostle" and "prophet", it does, however, believe there are those in the church who "exercise the ministry function of apostles and prophets". Apostolic functions relate to evangelizing previously unreached areas or people groups.¹
- ❑ We believe that modern missionaries still fulfil an apostolic role in that they are church planters and that they are "messengers" proclaiming the gospel in foreign lands and areas where the gospel is unknown.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assemblies_of_God_USA

APOSTLE-MISSIONARIES

- ❑ Yet many of the renowned Protestant missionaries were women e.g. Isobel Kuhn, Florence Young, Mildred Cable, Gladys Aylward, Amy Carmichael, Lillian Trasher, Mary Slessor and Lottie Moon. They evangelised, preached, taught, established churches and wrote books.



Lottie Moon



Amy Carmichael



Mary Slessor



Gladys Aylward

APOSTLE-MISSIONARIES

- E.g. In 1956 five American missionaries in Ecuador, including Jim Elliot and Nate Saint, were killed by the unreached and savage Huaorani (Auca) people. In 1958, Rachel Saint (Nate's sister) and Elisabeth Elliot (Jim's widow) returned to the Huaorani. Where the five men had failed to gain entrance into the Huaorani society, these women were not perceived as a threat and were able to move into a settlement and evangelised both men and women. Rachel worked for Wycliffe Bible Translators and created a dictionary of the Huaorani language.



Rachel Saint

EVANGELIST

- ❑ Jesus took the time to witness to a Samaritan woman of poor reputation. He selects her as his instrument to proclaim his messiahship in the town of Sychar.

Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ? (John 4:29)



- ❑ What was the Samaritan woman if not an evangelist?

➤ John 4:39 (NIV) Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

PROPHETESSES

- ❑ What of women prophets?
- ❑ Miriam was both a prophetess and a worship leader.



- Ex 15:20 (NIV)
Then Miriam
the prophetess,
Aaron's sister,
took a
tambourine in
her hand, and
all the women
followed
her, with
tambourines
and dancing.

PROPHETESSES

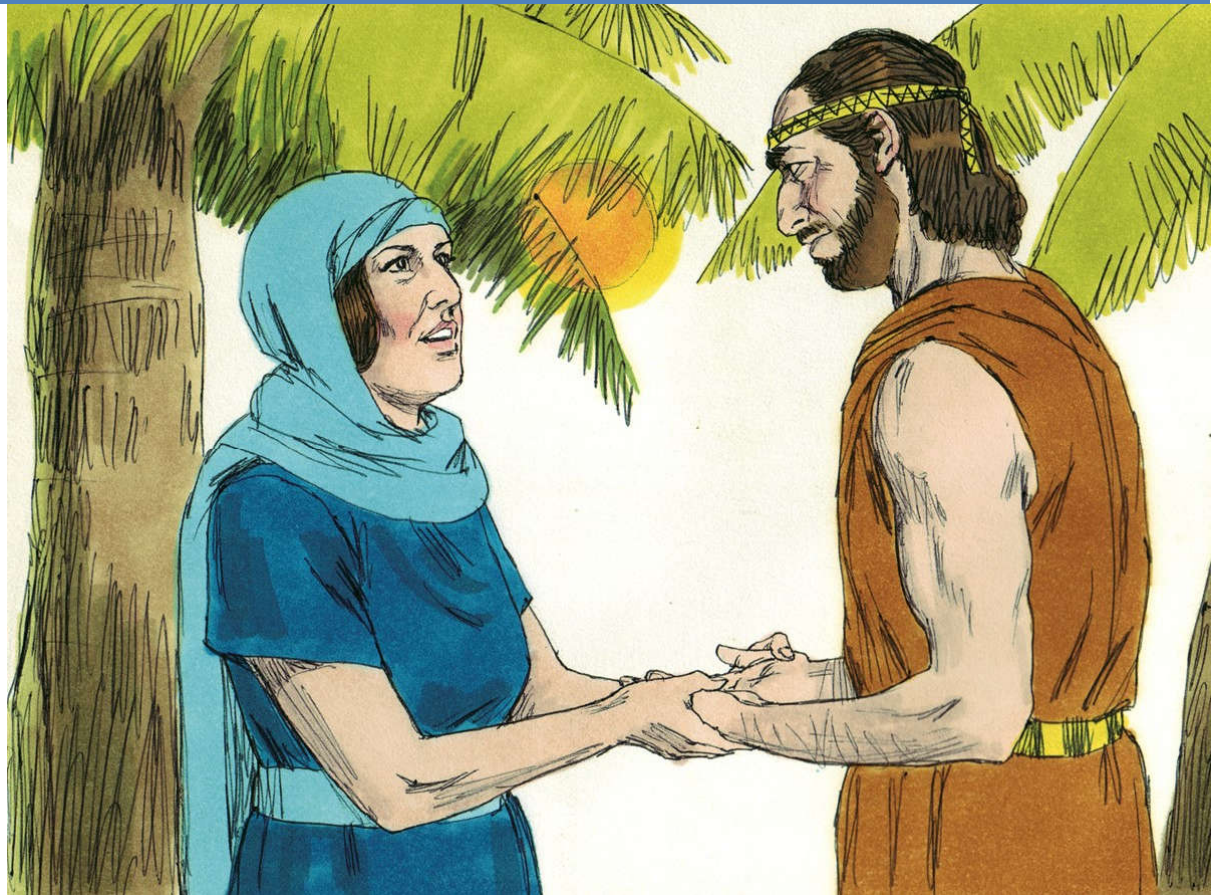
- ❑ Huldah was a prophetess who provided council to King Josiah's delegation.¹ She was held in such regard that the Huldah Gates in the Southern Wall of the Temple Mount are named after her.



¹ 2 Kings 22:14-19 (NIV) Hilkiah the priest... went to speak to the prophetess Huldah... She said to them... "Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD... says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD...'"

PROPHETESSES

- ❑ Deborah was both a prophetess and a judge of Israel.
 - Judges 4:4 (NIV) Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time.



- ❑ The prophet Isaiah's wife was a prophetess.
 - Isa 7:3 (NIV) Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.

PROPHETESSES

- ❑ Rachel (Gen 30:24) and Elisabeth (Lk 1:41-45) are also believed to have spoken prophetically.
- ❑ The inspired songs, prayers, praises and teachings of Miriam (Ex 15:20-21), Deborah (Judg 5:1ff), Hannah (1 Sam 2:1ff), Abigail (1 Sam 25:28-31)... Mary (Luke 1:46ff) and Elizabeth (Luke 1:41ff) are considered prophetic and are included in Scripture. They have been recorded in the Bible and thus have the authority of Scripture.¹
- ❑ Likewise the wonderful chapter 31 of Proverbs which includes the Description of a Worthy Woman, were an oracle taught to Lemuel by his mother.
 - Prov 31:1 (NASB) The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him...

¹ <https://margmowczko.com/philips-propheying-daughters/>

PROPHETESSES

- ❑ A prophet is someone through whom God speaks to his people. Miriam says the Lord has “spoken through” her (Num 12:2). Deborah says to Barak: “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you...” (Judg 4:6). Huldah similarly starts her message by saying: “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says...” (2 Kings 22:15).
- ❑ In fact, in terms of prophets, the NT is the most explicit regarding the role of women. Neither gender nor age are used to exclude anyone.
 - “In the last days... I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and **daughters will prophesy**. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams. Even upon my servants, men and **women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they **will prophesy**.” (Acts 2:17,18 CEB)

PROPHETESSES

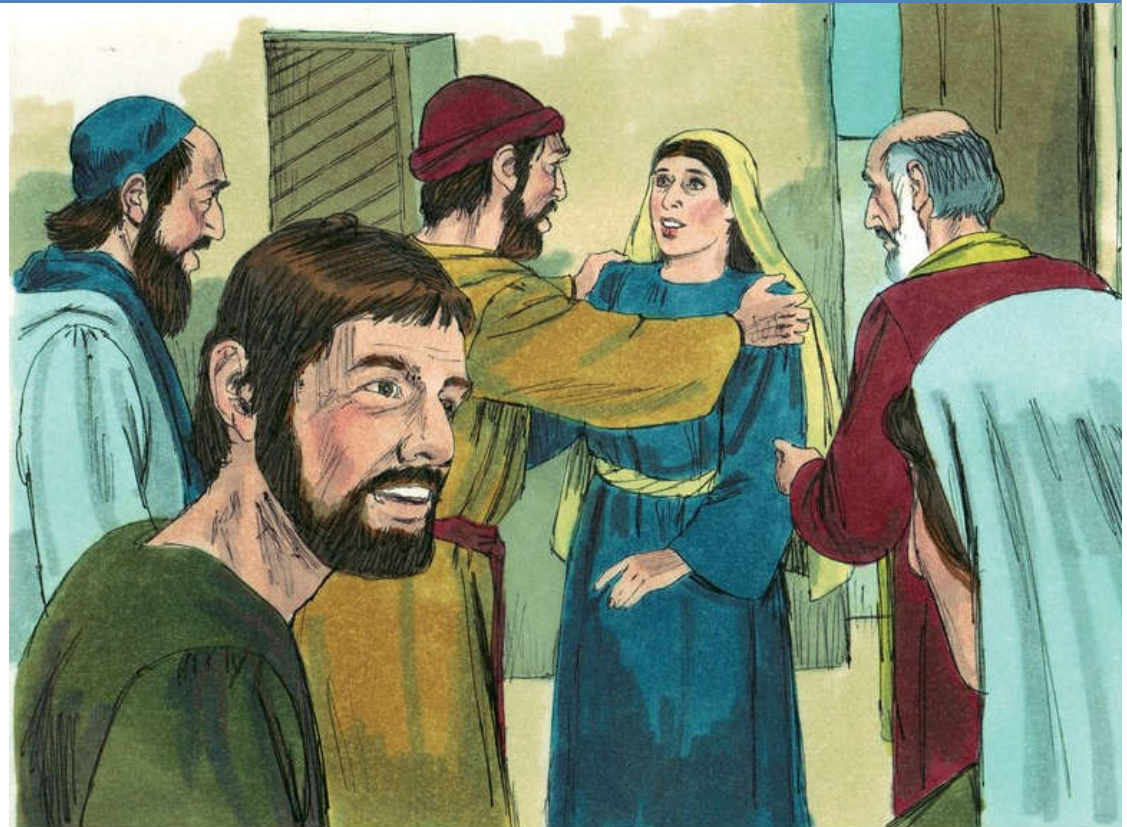
- ❑ The prophetess Anna greets Mary and Joseph in the Temple and speaks of the baby Jesus' prophetic destiny.



- Luke 2:36-38 (NIV) There was also a prophetess, Anna... Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

PROPHETESSES

- ❑ Philip the Evangelist (not to be confused with the apostle) had 4 daughters who were prophetesses. This family hosted Paul and his companions on his return from his third mission trip.



- Acts 21:8-9 (NIV)

Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

PROPHETESSES

- ❑ Philip and his daughters relocated to Hierapolis in Phrygia. According to Orthodox and Catholic tradition two of these sisters, Hermione and Eutychia went to Ephesus in search of the apostle John, but he had already died when they arrived. Hermione of Ephesus was known as a prophet and healer and was martyred in AD 117 during the persecutions of Christians under the emperor Hadrian.
- ❑ Papias of Hierapolis, described by Irenaeus as "an ancient man who was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp" wrote fondly of his encounter with these women.¹

¹ According to Eusebius, "... Papias, who lived at the same time, relates that he had received a wonderful narrative from the daughters of Philip." (Eccl. Hist. 3:39:8-9)

PROPHETESSES

- ❑ In an epistle from Polycrates (bishop of Ephesus) to Victor (bishop of Rome) he refers to the death of John, Philip and his daughters by saying: "in Asia also **great lights** have fallen asleep".¹



- ❑ Eusebius notes that Philip's daughters were held in high regard by the early church. He says that "Among those that were celebrated at that time was Quadratus, who, report says, was **renowned along with the daughters of Philip** for his prophetical gifts."²

¹ Eccl. Hist. 3:31:2-3

² Eccl. Hist. 3:37:1

PROPHETESSES

- ❑ Eusebius further implies that Philip's daughters, like Quadratus, were esteemed successors to the apostles' ministry. He writes that they and others **"occupied the first place among the successors of the apostles"**.¹
 - And they also, being illustrious disciples of such great men, built up the foundations of the churches which had been laid by the apostles in every place, and preached the Gospel more and more widely and scattered the saving seeds of the kingdom of heaven far and near throughout the whole world.¹
- ❑ Now we will look at the office of elder/ pastor/ overseer and the role of women there, along with some objections raised to women leadership.

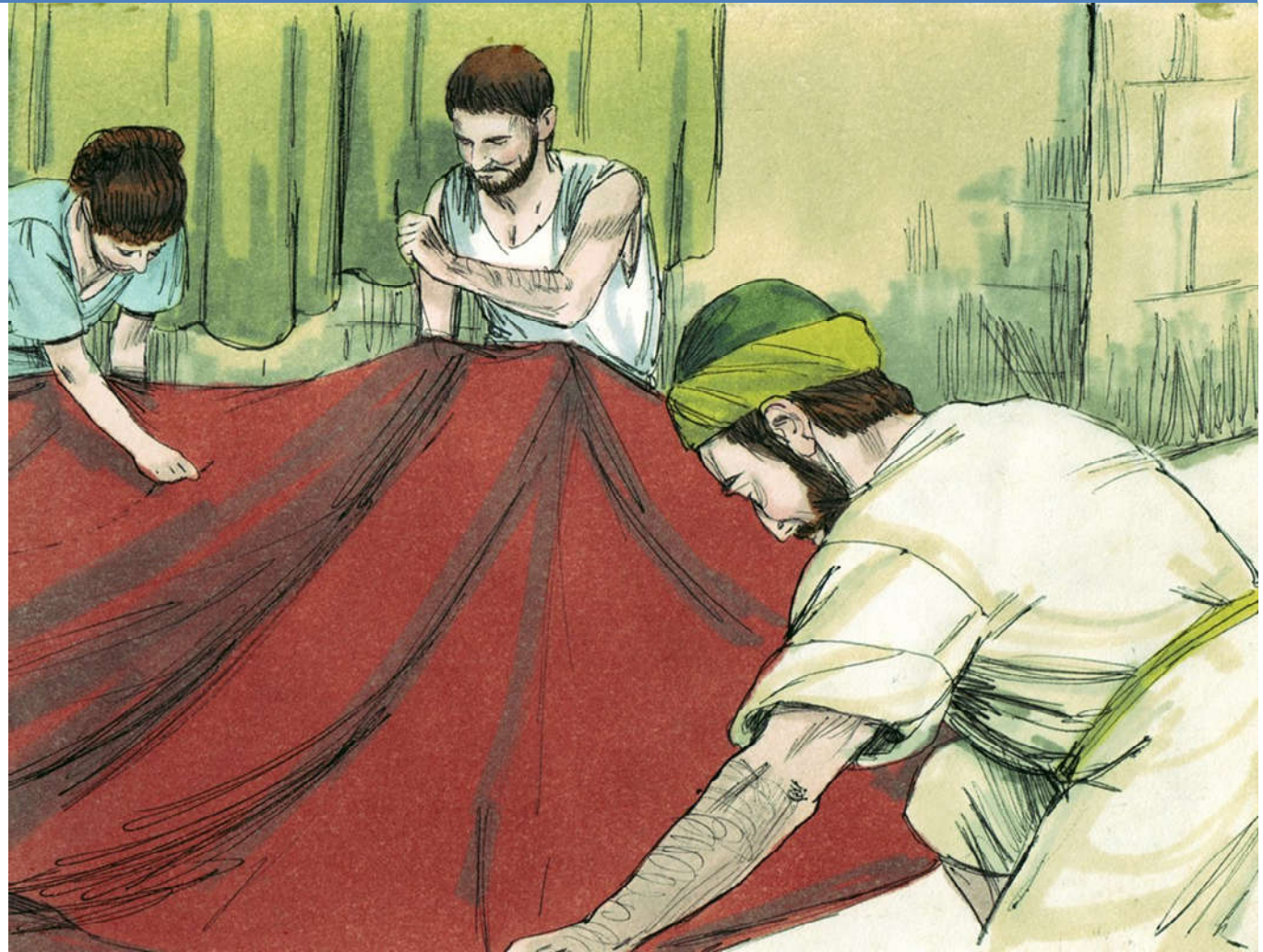
¹ Eccl. Hist. 3:37:1

FEMALE ELDERS?

- ❑ Some critics of women ministering point out that there are no names of women elders explicitly mentioned in the Bible.
- ❑ Neither are any names listed for men elders besides the apostles Peter and John who also identify themselves as such in their epistles. And in terms of evangelists only one person (Philip) is referred by this term. While Paul refers to the many women he mentions as co-worker, apostle (apostolos) and minister/deacon (diakonos) he does not identify any of his colleagues (male or female) as elder, bishop or pastor.
- ❑ The reality is that the Early Church was not preoccupied with titles because of the many admonitions of Jesus in this regard. They generally just performed the ministry without worrying too much about what people called them.

PRISCILLA

- ❑ Prisca (or Priscilla, the diminutive form) and her husband Aquila are refugees from Rome following a persecution by Emperor Claudius (Acts 18:1).



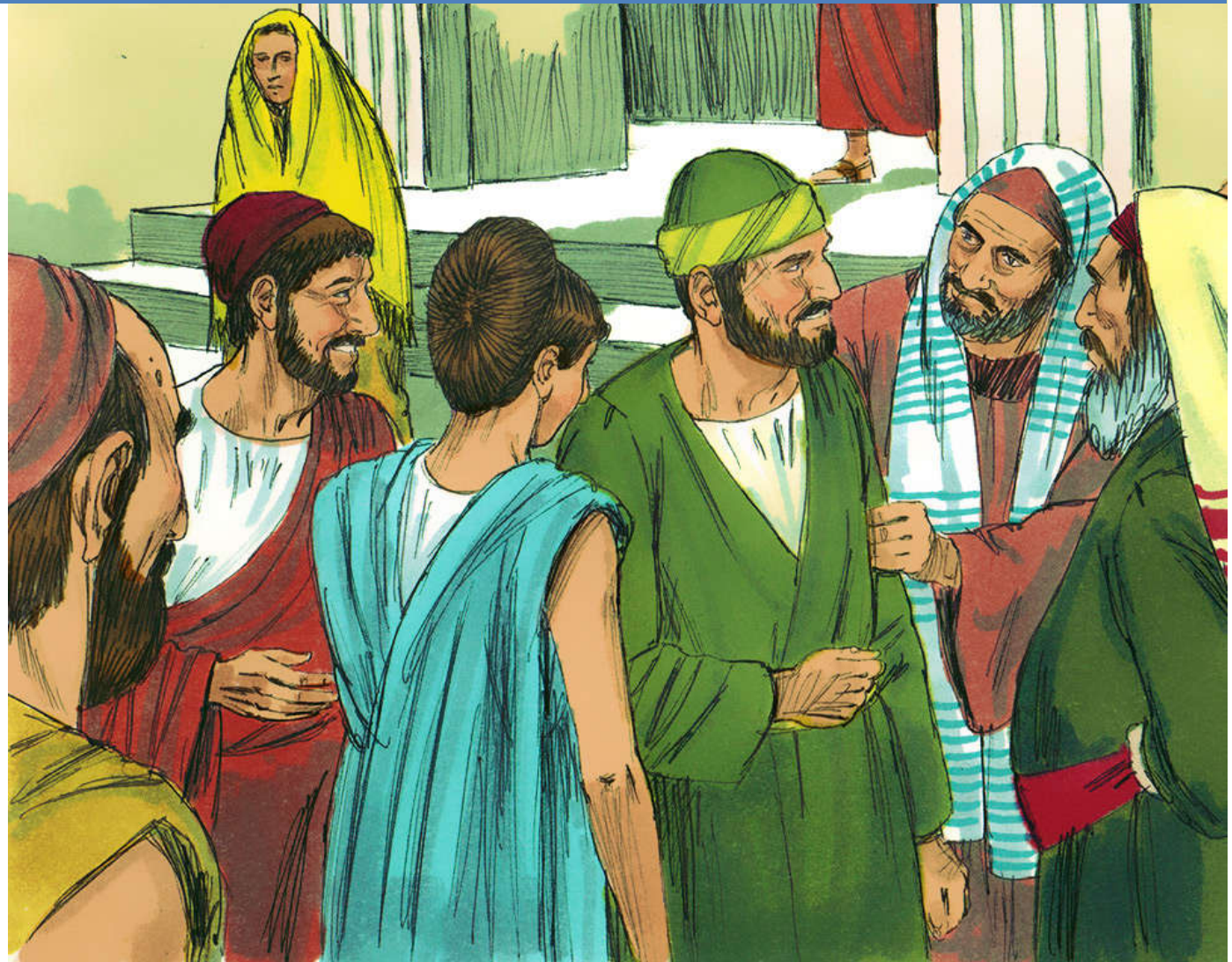
In Corinth, as fellow tentmakers they become business partners with Paul.

PRISCILLA

- ❑ But they are also co-workers in evangelism with Paul.

- ❑ In most cases Priscilla is mentioned before her husband, something extremely

unusual in the culture of the day, suggesting that she was the more prominent one in the ministry.



PRISCILLA

- Acts 18:18-19 (NIV) Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila... They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila... Then he set sail from Ephesus.



PRISCILLA

- ❑ Apollos, another Jewish missionary comes to Ephesus. He is "a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24).
- ❑ But he is only partly informed about the gospel:
 - Acts 18:25-26 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue.



PRISCILLA

- ❑ So Priscilla and Aquila instruct him more fully.
 - Acts 18:26 When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.



- ❑ Again Priscilla is mentioned first, most likely indicating that she took the greater role. Remember that correcting doctrine is one of the functions of an elder/pastor. Note also that this would have involved Priscilla teaching a man and makes her a “teacher of teachers”.

PRISCILLA

- ❑ Paul later re-joins the couple in Ephesus (Acts 19). He writes his first letter to the Corinthians and sends joint greetings indicating that the Ephesian church was meeting in their home.
 - 1 Cor 16:19 (NIV) Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.
- ❑ At some point Priscilla and Aquila returned to Rome. The edict expelling Jews from Rome was lifted at the death of Claudius in AD 54. We don't know when they returned but we know they were there by the time Paul writes his letter to the Romans from Corinth as he sends them greetings. The couple had hosted a church in Ephesus, and did the same in Rome.

PRISCILLA

- ❑ Paul calls Priscilla a co-worker (fellow worker) and says to the Christians in Rome:
 - Rom 16:3-5 (ESV) Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Greet also the church in their house.
- ❑ We don't have details on how they "risked their necks for" Paul's life, but we see that all the Gentile churches felt indebted to the couple. Again Priscilla is mentioned before her husband. In fact, she is listed first in the lengthy list of 26 named people Paul greets. Could this indicate that she was a leader in the church at Rome or at least in the church at their home?

PRISCILLA

- ❑ In his final epistle, written before his execution by Nero, Paul sends greetings to the couple via Timothy:
 - 2 Tim 4:19 (NIV) Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.
- ❑ As Paul is writing from Rome and Timothy is believed to have been in Ephesus, it seems that Priscilla and Aquila had again left Rome - possibly to escape Nero's persecution of Christians. In the final days of his life, Paul extends greetings to his old friends and co-workers in Christ.
- ❑ Besides Timothy, who is the recipient of the letter, he greets only Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Is it possible that these four people were the leaders of the Ephesian church?

HOME CHURCH HOSTESS

- ❑ Besides Priscilla, who together with her husband hosted a church in their home, there are other cases of women who did this.
 1. Mother of John Mark - where the prayer meeting was held for the release of Peter (Acts 12:12)
 2. Nympha (in Colossae or Laodicea)
 3. Possibly Lydia in Philippi ¹
 4. Possibly Chloe in Corinth ²
 5. Possibly "the chosen lady" of 2 John

¹ It is quite likely that this is where the Philippian church met as Paul and Silas stayed here while in Philippi and meet the believers here after their release from prison (Acts 16:40). ² 1 Cor 1:11 (NIV) My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

NYMPHA

- ❑ Was Nympha the pastor of her house church?
 - Col 4:15 (NASB) Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also **Nympha and the church that is in her house.**¹
- ❑ Granted - having a church in your house does not necessarily imply that you are the leader. But Paul greets only Nympha by name. Surely if there was another pastor/elder we would expect Paul to extend the same courtesy by greeting them. But he does not.



¹ The KJV renders this "Nymphas, and the church which is in his house" but the ESV, NIV and most English translations agree with the NASB rendering.

THE ELECT LADY

- ❑ There are those who have suggested that the “elect lady” that John addresses in 2 John was a metaphor for a church.
 - 2 John 1:1 (ESV) The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth...
- ❑ Others maintain that the language suggests that this was an individual.
 - ... the word “lady” (kuria) used in 2 John 1 & 5, is the female equivalent of “lord” (kurios). This lady was a woman with an elevated social position. Numerous ancient papyrus letters, as well as ancient Greek literature, show that kuria was a respectful way to address a woman.¹

¹ <https://margmowczko.com/new-testament-women-church-leaders>

THE ELECT LADY

- ❑ If indeed the lady was a church then what could her “children” possibly refer to?
 - 2 John 1:4 (ESV) I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.
- ❑ But if she is an individual then her children could either refer to her physical children or to members of a church. In favour of the latter view, John often refers to believers as “children” (1 John 2:1,12,13,18,28; 3:1,2,7,10, 18; 4:4; 5:2,19,21; 3 John 1:4).
- ❑ If the children are a church then it's possible that the “elect lady” is a woman leader (elder/pastor) of the church.

THE ELECT LADY

➤ In 3 John 1:4, John writes to a man called Gaius saying, "I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in the truth." Compare this with what John writes to the chosen lady in 2 John 1:4: "I rejoiced greatly having found out from [some of] your children that they are walking in the truth." 3 John 1:4 is very similar to 2 John 1:4. The children of 1, 2 and 3 John are "spiritual children," not natural biological children. The children of the chosen lady were her "spiritual children," Christians she personally cared about, her congregation.¹

□ John resided in Ephesus in Asia Minor in his later years (when the letter was written). So it's possible that the "children" of the "elect lady" was a church in Asia Minor.

¹ <https://margmowczko.com/the-chosen-lady-in-2-john>

THE ELECT LADY

- 2 John 1:13 (ESV) The children of your elect sister greet you.
- ❑ Again the above "children" could either refer to physical children or to another church. In the latter case, it would most likely be the church in Ephesus, where John resided.
- ❑ Some have suggested that the elect lady was one of Philip's 4 daughters. We saw how they were held in high esteem by the early church. Two of Philip's daughters lived in Hierapolis in Asia Minor, while another two (Hermione and Eutychia) lived in Ephesus. Hermione of Ephesus was known as a prophet and was martyred in AD 117.
- ❑ Perhaps the "elect lady" was one of Philip's daughters in Hierapolis and the "elect sister" was Hermione (or Eutychia) of Ephesus, the city where John lived.

THE ELECT LADY

- 2 John 9-11 (NIV) Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them.** Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.
- ❑ As the early church generally met in houses, some see the mention of "house" above as a designation for the congregation. Accordingly they interpret this to be an instruction concerning whom she allows to minister in her house church. If this is the case, we are again reminded that correcting doctrine and discernment of false teaching is one of the functions of an elder/pastor.

THE EARLY CHURCH

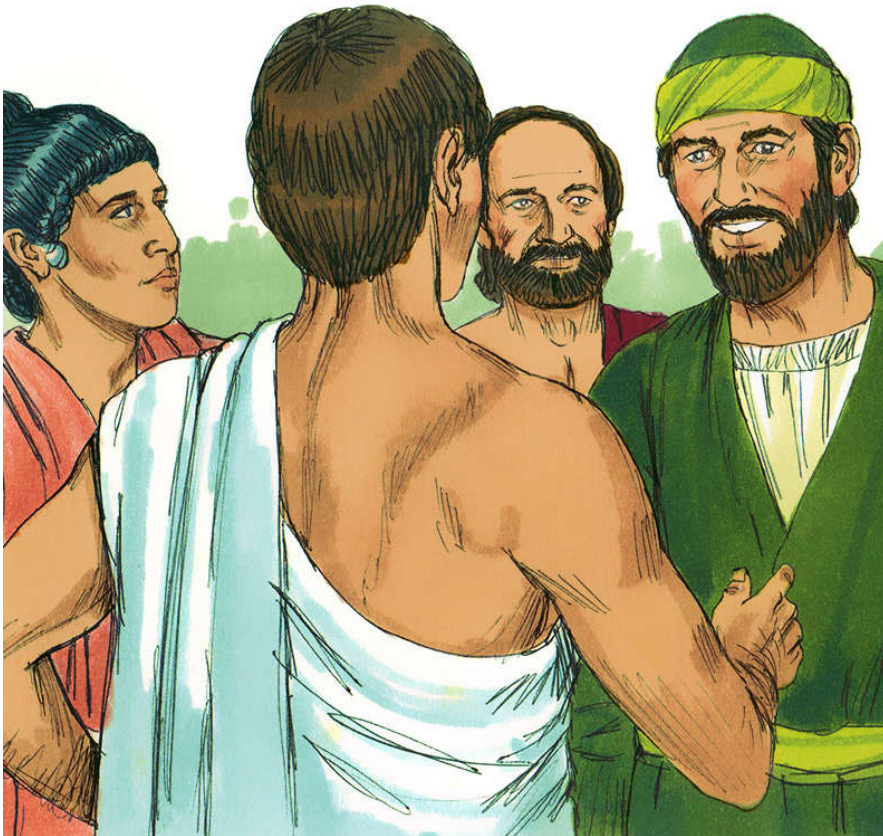
- ❑ Rodney William Stark, former long time professor of sociology and of comparative religion at the University of Washington writes, "Within the Christian subculture women enjoyed far higher status than did women in the Greco-Roman world at large."¹
- ❑ The early church seems to have been attractive to women, including those of high status like Joanna, Lydia and Damaris. Joanna, one of Jesus' female disciples and financial supporters was "the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household" (Luke 8:3). Lydia, one of Paul's first converts in Philippi who became a benefactor of the church was "a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira" (Acts 16:14).

¹ The Rise of Christianity (New York: HarperOne, 1996), 95.

THE EARLY CHURCH

❑ When Paul ministered in Athens:

- Acts 17:4 (NIV) Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and **not a few prominent women.**



- Acts 17:12 (NIV) Many of the Jews believed, as did also a **number of prominent Greek women...**
- Acts 17:34 (NIV) A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris...

THE EARLY CHURCH

- ❑ Celsus, a 2nd-century Greek philosopher and opponent of early Christianity, taunted that the church attracted “only foolish and low individuals, and persons devoid of perception, and slaves, and women, and children”.¹
- ❑ His contemporary, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, acknowledged in his Testimonia that “Christian maidens were very numerous” and that it was difficult to find Christian husbands for all of them. These comments give us a picture of a church disproportionately populated by women. Why? One reason might have been the practice of exposing unwanted female infants—abandoning them to certain death. Christians, of course, repudiated this practice, and thus had more living females.²

¹ Origen against Celsus 344, Ch 49 ² <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/women-in-the-early-church>

THE EARLY CHURCH

- ❑ Although not as common as female deacons, we have some evidence of women possibly holding the office of elder (presbytera) in the first several centuries of the church. But often the practice was disapproved of, based on Paul's words in 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:12.
- ❑ The old woman who instructed Hermas is called presbytis.¹
- ❑ Another prophetess attested to by extra-biblical tradition is Ammia, who prophesied in Philadelphia during New Testament times, and was received with reverence throughout Asia Minor. The first preserved mention of her dates to about 160 AD.¹

¹ <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/women-in-the-early-church>

THE EARLY CHURCH

- ❑ Dionysius of Alexandria, who died in 264 AD, described a martyr as "the most holy eldress Mercuria" and another as "a most remarkable virgin eldress Apollonia."¹
- ❑ There are 15 known frescoes, wall and tomb inscriptions referring to women who are called by the feminine form (presbytera) of the noun "elder" (presbyteros). But since the wives of elders were sometimes called by the same term, we can't be certain that every reference to a presbytera is meant to denote an ecclesiastical office. However, usually when that was the case, the husband was mentioned along with her, together with his title.

¹ Ibid.

THE EARLY CHURCH

- ❑ A damaged inscription in the cemetery of St. Paul's Outside The Walls in Rome: "Here lies the **venerable woman bishop** (episcopa) Q [name obscured] buried in peace..." ¹
- ❑ Hippo Mosaic in the Church of St. Augustine in Hippo 5th century: "**Presbyteress** (presbiterissa), **Guilia Runa** here lays in peace, she lived 50 years." ²
- ❑ A tomb inscription of 4th to 6th century origin was found in the city of Tropea, South Italy, which said: "Sacred to her memory. **Leta the 'presbytera'** lived 40 years, 8 months, 9 days, for whom her husband set up this tomb." ³ Her husband is mentioned but not honoured as an elder.

¹ F. Buecheler and A. Riese, (1964), 64. ² L'Annee Epigraphique 107 (1953), 36

³ Madigan and Osiek, Ordained Women in the Early Church, 193-4.

THE EARLY CHURCH

- ❑ AD 425 inscription on a sarcophagus in Dalmatia: "Under our Lord Theodosius, consul for the 11th time, and Valentinian, most noble man of Caesar, I, Theodosius, bought [a burial tomb] from **the matron Flavia Vitalia, holy presbyter** for three golden solids."
- ❑ A graffito from Poitiers, France (4th - 6th century?) refers to "**Martia the presbyter**" who "made the oblation".
- ❑ A 5th century fragmentary inscription is dedicated to a priestess in Solin. A cross on the inscription indicates that it was a Christian priestess, not a pagan one. The use of the feminine form of "sacerdota", rather than "presbytera" indicates that this is clearly not the wife of a priest (which in itself, had become uncommon due to rules on celibacy) or merely a respected elderly woman.

THE EARLY CHURCH

- ❑ Canon 20 of the Council of Tours (6th century) mentions an "episcopa Terni".
- ❑ The Church of St. Praxedis has an inscription from AD 820 containing the words: "... where the body of his most kind mother **Lady Bishop (Episcopa) Theodora** rests..." Episcopa is a Latin feminization of the Greek episkopos. Theodora was the mother of Pope Paschal I. Vandals appear to have attempted to scratch off the "a" in "episcopa" to obscure her gender. This case is extremely controversial, with critics arguing that Episcopa was simply an honorific title because her son was pope. It does also seem rather unusual that we would have a woman bishop in the 9th century as the Council of Laodicea (c. 363 AD) had prohibited this.¹

¹ Canon 11: Presbytides, as they are called, or female presidents, are not to be appointed in the Church.

THE EARLY CHURCH

- ❑ Atto, Bishop of Vercelli (885-961) writes to Ambrose the Priest confirming that women were ordained as elders and deacons in earlier years, but this was due to necessity.
 - ... since your discretion has prompted you to ask how we ought to understand in the canons for the terms 'female priest' or 'female deacon', it seems to me that since in the primitive Church... many are the crops and few the labourers, for the helping of men **even religious women were ordained caretakers in the holy Church.**
- ❑ He points out that "This practice c.11 of the Laodicean Council later prohibits when it says that it is not allowed for those women who are called 'priests' or 'those presiding' to be ordained in the Churches." ¹

¹ <http://www.womenpriests.org/tradition/letter-of-atto-bishop-of-vercelli-to-the-priest-ambrose>

THE EARLY CHURCH

- Atto believes that the practice of baptising infants has removed the necessity for women deacons, writing: "We also believe the following: that the office of baptizing was enjoined upon women so that the bodies of other women might be touched by them without any deeply felt sense of shame... For just as these **women who were called priests (presbyterae)** had assumed the duty of **preaching, ordering, and instructing**, in the same way clearly the **deaconesses** had assumed the duty of **ministering and baptizing**, a practice which today is not at all in use. For infants are baptized in the religion of their parents at such a young age that there can be no impediment of modesty or shame. Therefore it has now been established that women should not presume to take up the custom of baptizing." ¹

¹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

- ❑ In closing off Part 1, here is an excerpt from the A/G US Position Paper on "The Role of Women in Ministry":
 - The Assemblies of God has been blessed and must continue to be blessed by the ministry of God's gifted and commissioned daughters. The Bible repeatedly affirms that God pours out His Spirit upon both men and women and thereby gifts both sexes for ministry in His Church. Therefore, we must continue to affirm the gifts of women in ministry and spiritual leadership. Surely, the enormous challenge of the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) requires the full deployment of all God's Spirit-gifted ministers, both men and women.¹

¹ <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/The-Role-of-Women-in-Ministry>

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