

Called to Prophecy

Luke 2:36-38; Acts 2:16-21; Acts 21:8-9
SS Lesson for 01/31/2021

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 12:6-12

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Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

All three of today's lesson texts come from the author Luke. Analysis of his two books (Luke and Acts) shows that he had special regard for women (Luke 7:11-14; 10:38-42; 13:11-13; Acts 1:14; 16:13; etc.). These texts and others afford an opportunity to celebrate stories that are sometimes overlooked. These women, named or not, played important roles in the ministry of Jesus that continued in the church. The Jews of Luke's day lived not only in Palestine but also in enclaves of Greek and Roman cities throughout the empire (examples: Acts 2:5; 6:9; 14:1). Jews maintained their own practices regarding women's roles, as directed by their understanding of Scripture and of family structure from ancient times. In general, a Jewish female was attached to a man who served as her provider, protector, and authority. Normally, a father held this role for a daughter and a husband for a wife. Devout Jews honored God's concern for widows (see Deuteronomy 27:19). These often were older women who had no opportunities to remarry or be employed. For them, the likelihood of having a male provider was limited, necessitating help from the community (compare Acts 6:1-7; James 1:27). Women were allowed to attend synagogue gatherings, but only as observers. They were usually seated in a balcony or in some other section apart from men. The temple in Jerusalem that was rebuilt after the exile had a courtyard for women, beyond which women were not allowed.

Jewish communities experienced varying degrees of influence from Greek and Roman cultures. As the Roman Empire expanded, Romans brought their traditions to their conquered peoples. Roman society was dominated by men at all levels: business, politics, government, and military. But some women gained influence by their association with powerful men. In particular, some wives of the emperors achieved notoriety and celebrity. Sometimes mothers, wives, or sisters would even appear on the coinage of an emperor. Women also played an important role in the civic religion of Rome, with the revered Vestal Virgins recognized as maintaining the ancient traditions of the city. However, the primary sphere of influence for Roman women was within the home, where they managed the household and saw to the proper raising of children. The Romans idealized the "matron," the upper-class woman who managed her home well and remained chaste, modest, and loyal to her husband (in many cases, in spite of his own lack of sexual fidelity). Although the Greeks had been conquered by the Romans, Greek culture survived and remained influential in reshaping Roman society. Greek culture, like that of the Romans, was male-dominated; the home was considered to be the proper realm of women. The Greeks, however, were not as uniformly tradition-bound as the Romans in this regard. Some Greek women were people of business, and their wealth gave them influence in their communities (compare Acts 17:12). Even so, relationships within families varied in pagan cultures. Some husbands loved and respected their wives and saw them as equal partners in life. Other men had little affection for their wives and might abuse or ignore them, with few consequences from society outside the home. Wives often tolerated sexual infidelity by men, but women who were unfaithful were liable to divorce, disgrace, or even death. No one considered this to be a double standard, but simply the proper state of things in society. The prominence of even a few women in the New Testament accounts is therefore both surprising and instructive.

Key Verse: Acts 2:17

And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

2:14-15. Peter began with a rebuttal of their accusation of drunkenness. **It was only 9 in the morning** (lit., "the third hour of the day"; days began at 6 A.M.), far too early for a group of revelers to be inebriated!

2:16-21. Instead of being drunk the believers were experiencing what was described in Joel 2. In Peter's words, **This is what was spoken by the Prophet Joel.** This clause does not mean, "This is *like* that"; it means Pentecost fulfilled what Joel had described. However, the prophecies of Joel quoted in Acts 2:19-20 were not fulfilled. The implication is that the remainder would be fulfilled if Israel would repent. This aspect of contingency is discussed more fully in 3:19-23.

2:22. Jesus' **miracles**, Peter said, were God's way of verifying Jesus' claims **to you**, the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22; 14:22).

2:23. The point of this verse is clear: the Crucifixion was no accident. It was in **God's set purpose** (*boulē*, "plan") and was God's determined will, not merely His inclination. It was a divine necessity (cf. 4:28). When Peter referred to **you**, he meant Jews; and by **wicked men** he perhaps meant Gentiles because the word "wicked" means lawless (*anomōn*). Both Gentiles and Jews were implicated in Christ's **death**. Many times the apostles accused the Jews of crucifying Jesus (2:23, 36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:28), though the apostles also held the Gentiles culpable (2:23; 4:27; cf. Luke 23:24-25).

2:24. The resurrection of the Lord is a basic doctrine in Acts (v. 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33-34, 37; 17:31; 26:23). Here is another indication that He is the Messiah for **it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him** (John 20:9).

2:25-35. These verses include four proofs of the Lord's resurrection and Ascension: (a) The prophecy of Psalm 16:8-11 and the presence of David's **tomb** (Acts 2:25-31), (b) the witnesses of the Resurrection (v. 32), (c) the supernatural events of Pentecost (v. 33), and (d) the Ascension of David's greater Son (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:34-35).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Prophecy of Redemption (Luke 2:36-38)

36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Redemption regardless of age (36-37)

Age should be no problem if living a godly example (1 Tim 4:12)

12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Age should not hinder following Jesus (Matt 18:10)

10 "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

Age should be no problem because God appoints His followers (Jer 1:4-8)

4 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." 6 "Ah, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." 7 But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

Age should be no problem if seeking and using God's wisdom and discernment (1 Kings 3:6-12)

6 Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. 7 "Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. 8 Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. 9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" 10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. 11 So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, 12 I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

Redemption realized (38)

A redemption that has the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (2 Cor 5:2-5)

2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

A redemption that has a promise of a transformation into glory (Phil 3:20-21)

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

A redemption that has as a reward a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

A redemption because we are God's possession (Eph 1:14)

14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

A redemption by a God that has unfailing love (Ps 130:7)

7 O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

Prophecy through the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-21)

16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

21 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'

The Holy Spirit poured out (16-18)

Poured out from God (Joel 2:28-29)

28 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Poured out through anointing (1 John 2:20)

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

Poured out to teach all things (1 John 2:27)

27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him.

Poured out to save (Ps 20:6)

6 Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed; he answers him from his holy heaven with the saving power of his right hand.

Poured out to empower to stand firm (2 Cor 1:21-22)

21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Poured out to open spiritual eyes (Rev 3:18)

18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

The Holy Spirit's empowerment of signs (19-20)

Empowerment prophesied (Joel 2:30-32)

30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 32 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

Empowerment given to the apostles (Acts 2:43)

43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

Empowerment provided to confirm God's message (Acts 14:3)

3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.

Empowerment to testify about God's salvation (Heb 2:3-4)

3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

The Holy Spirit's conviction to salvation (21)

Conviction sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13)

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

Conviction guarded by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:14)

14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Conviction testified by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Heb 2:4)

4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Conviction through preaching empowered by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:12)

12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Prophecy for Evangelism (Acts 21:8-9)

8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

Evangelism through fellowship (8)

Fellowship that is steadfast (Acts 2:40-43)

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Phil 2:1-4)

1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Fellowship through righteousness (1 John 1:3-7)

3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete. 5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Evangelism prophesied (9)

Prophesied to proclaim the kingdom of God (Luke 9:60)

60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Prophesied by being called and sent to preach (Rom 10:15)

15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Prophesied to admonish and teach (Col 1:28-29)

28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Prophesied that it would require endurance (2 Cor 6:4-10)

4 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; 5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; 6 in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; 7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; 8 through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; 9 known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; 10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. 11 We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bruce Hurt

So **the last days** have been going on for 2000 years and Peter is explaining to the Jewish audience that what was happening on the Day of Pentecost was exactly what the Jewish prophet Joel had predicted would happen in **the last days**. It follows that for 2000 years the Spirit of God has been poured out **on all mankind**, whether Jew or Gentile, that has placed their faith in Jesus as their Redeemer and Lord and He will continue to be poured out until the end of this present age, until the end of the last days which will come to an end when Jesus returns.

Last (2078) (**eschatos** gives us "eschatology") an adjective which means last in time or space/place (most remote) (Acts 1:8, Acts 13:47). Eschatos indicates the meaning "last" in the sense of a final stage in a process. For example, in Rev 15:1 the "last seven" plagues of judgment against the earth are declared to be the completion of God's wrath against the wickedness of humankind. Eschatos can indicate the final element in a significant series. Eschatology then is the study of the "last things", especially the times preceding and culminating in the Second Coming of the King of kings (Rev 17:14+, Rev 19:16+). Indeed, the return of our Lord Jesus Christ is the final (eschatos) stage of the drama, the consummation of the history ("HIS-story") of the world!

Here is Joel 2:28 "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions." Note that as alluded to above, Peter changes the wording slightly, adapting to his purpose. And so while Joel says "**It will come about after this,**" Peter says it "**shall be in the last days.**" Notice Peter does not say this event on the Day of Pentecost fulfilled Joel's prophecy.

John MacArthur explains the importance of Peter's reference to the **last days** - Viewed in that context of intense Jewish expectation (OF THE MESSIAH), Peter's announcement that **the last days**, a name for messianic times, had already begun (Acts 2:16-21) was shocking. That startling claim, made by the apostle in the introduction to his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, directed his hearers logically into his sermon's theme. **For if the messianic times had indeed begun, then Messiah must have come. That is precisely the thesis Peter develops in the main body of his sermon. He presents the truth that Israel's long-awaited Messiah has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.** It is difficult for twentieth-century readers to appreciate how profoundly disturbing that claim was to the Jews. Messiah was the central figure in Jewish thought...In light of that, for Peter to boldly proclaim Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah had to both shock and outrage his listeners. After all, less than two months earlier they had executed Jesus for claiming to be the Messiah. Now his upstart followers were making that same claim on His behalf. To the Jewish mind, there could be no greater expression of blasphemy. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts) (Bolding added).

I Howard Marshall explains that "Peter regards Joel's prophecy as applying to **the last days**, and claims that his hearers are now living in **the last days**. God's final act of salvation has begun to take place." (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries – Acts)

John Piper describes the **last days** this way - We are living in the last days, because the last days began with the first coming of Jesus...we live between the beginning of the end of the age and the end of the end of the age. We live between the beginning of the kingdom of God and the consummation of the kingdom.

And it shall be in the last days God says that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind - Peter is telling the Jewish crowd that what they are observing is God's pouring forth of the **Holy Spirit on all of mankind**, which in context does not mean every person on the planet, but all of God's people, all who believe in His Son. In the Old Testament on whom was the Spirit active? His ministry was selective and He predominantly came upon prophets, priests and kings. But Peter says that now a new age has arrived and hereafter the Spirit would be poured out **on all mankind** who believe.

Darrell Bock - The universality of the distribution is one of the main elements of the promise. Before this new period, the Spirit had been distributed to a few people on special occasions for special enablement (see Luke 3:4-6 [Isa. 40:3-5], Lk 3:16-17). This is a key sign that the new era has come. Right now Peter understands this outpouring as referring to Jews, but he will come to see, as the Lord leads, that this universality includes Gentiles. **The rest of the citation makes clear that people of every gender, age, and class are meant.** (Baker Exegetical Commentary)

Ray Stedman - Peter's explanation is very simple. This, he said, is what Joel declared would happen. It is, therefore, neither unexpected nor unexplained. It is what Joel predicted. The key to this passage from Joel is the phrase, **all flesh** (all mankind). **"I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."** If you read the prophecy as it occurs in the second chapter of Joel, you will find that, before this passage, the prophet had predicted that the Lord would visit His people. He would come to them and would live in their midst (Joel 2:27). Then, as the prophet puts it, "afterward" ("It will come about after this" - Joel 2:28) "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." The contrast is between the visitation of God to Israel, and the pouring out of the Spirit upon all peoples everywhere -- Gentiles as well as Jew. The emphasis of this section (Acts 2:16-18) is that now the good news about Jesus Christ is to go out to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Up to this point it had been confined to the Jewish nation. Jesus had said more than once, "I have come only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10:6, 15:24). But he had also said, "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold; these also I must bring that there may be one flock." (John 10:16). Now Peter announces that the time has come when God would pour out his Spirit upon **all flesh**, Jews and Gentiles alike. **Not only all people everywhere, but all kinds of people -- young men, young women, male and female.** "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions." Note the emphasis upon youth. God is saying that in this age of the Spirit, leadership, effectiveness, and power will not be limited to grey hairs, but also young men and young women shall **speak and lead** -- shall **see visions** and **prophesy**. Even servants, menservants and maidservants, obscure people, insignificant people, upon them God would pour out his Spirit; and they would **prophesy**. All classes are affected by this. What Peter did not say is as important as what he did say. He said this is what Joel predicted, but he did not use the phrase which is usually used in the New Testament concerning an Old Testament prophecy. **He did not say, "Thus is fulfilled what was said by the prophet Joel."** From other Scriptures we learn that Joel's prophecy has yet to be fulfilled in a greater way. Once again God will visit his people at the second return of Jesus Christ. Then, after his return, the Spirit will be poured out again. When Peter quotes this passage he changes the word which Joel used, "afterward," to the phrase, "in the last days." Thus Peter is adapting this to the present age of the Spirit which begins, he says, with the pouring out of the Spirit of God. (What is This?)

John Piper on all mankind or all flesh - This means that the outpouring of the fullness of the Holy Spirit is not to be restricted or held in; God means it to be worldwide. This too is the meaning of the time we live in. It is the great missionary time. We simply don't know the meaning of our day if we are content with the present extent of the gospel and the out-pouring of the Spirit on the unreached peoples of the world. When Joel and Peter say that the young men will see visions and the old men will dream dreams, this is what they have in mind—dreams and visions about the spread of the kingdom of God until "all flesh" is reached. One strong evidence for this is that in the rest of the book of Acts all the dreams and visions are given for missionary strategy and missionary motivation. Ananias (Acts 9) has a vision to go commission Paul for his great missionary work. Peter (Acts 10) has a vision to carry the gospel and the Spirit to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house. Paul (Acts 16) has a vision of Europeans saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." (See also Acts 18:9; 26:19.) When the Spirit comes in his fullness, this is what will happen for the young and for the old. The Bible says, you are never too old to see a vision and dream a dream for the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ—never! (Old and Young Shall Dream Together - Read this entire sermon from 1981 for Piper's view on the significance of Acts 2:16-17)

In another sermon (in 1981) **Piper** says this about **all mankind** or all flesh - Third, we learn that "all flesh" does not mean every human without exception. This was already clear from the Old Testament. Already Joel said,

"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel 2:32). There are those who do not call on the name of the Lord; they sense no need for him and no joy in him. But it is impossible that the promise of the Spirit belongs to them. All flesh does not mean every individual; it means every sort of individual in every nation. It means that no one can look at anything he is by birth and say, "This excludes me from the promise." But what we do learn new from the New Testament is that the only way to receive the promise of the Spirit is to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. Peter concludes his sermon in Acts 2:38 with these words: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Therefore Peter announces that with the coming of Jesus Christ, "calling upon the name of the Lord" means turning from all other hopes and calling upon Jesus in the act of baptism (cf. 1 Peter 3:21)....I conclude, therefore, that the prophecy of Joel 2:28–32 does apply to us, precisely to us who claim to pin our hope for salvation on Jesus. And, therefore, I return to my original application: Would that all God's people were prophets! A friend of mine, Mark Noll, who teaches history at Wheaton, wrote a review of a recent publication of Jonathan Edwards' scientific writings. He said something about Edwards which I want so much to be true of me, and which I pray will be true of all of you. He said, "**Jonathan Edwards was a thoroughly God-besotted individual.**" "Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Perhaps, after all, Peter and the 120 were drunk—inebriated by the beauty and greatness of God. (Acts 2:17 This Is What Was Spoken By the Prophet Joel)

G Campbell Morgan has an interesting thought on the Spirit poured forth on all mankind or all flesh - The Spirit is upon all flesh for clearly defined purposes. He is on all flesh to convict of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. He is in the human race as the power that hinders evil, and He will hinder until He be taken out of the way. (Acts Commentary 2:14-21)

Pour out gives one the picture of the Spirit being poured out like a torrential downpour on a scorched and thirsty earth!

I will pour forth (1632) (**ekcheo** from **ek** = out + **chéo** = pour) means literally to flow out, to gush forth or to pour out. The inherent idea is to cause something to be emitted in quantity. This verb is used 3x in this chapter - Acts 2:17, 18, 33. Note that in Acts 2:33+ Peter teaches that it is Jesus Who is responsible for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (See this depicted in the diagram above)

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49+), He (JESUS THE NAZARENE) has **poured forth** this which you both see and hear.

Paul uses **ekcheo** to describe the pouring out of the Spirit in Titus 3:5+. His point is that the Spirit is poured out on each believer when they experience the new birth. In a sense, the Spirit's work in each believer as a member of the Body (1 Cor 12:13) is a continuation of the Pentecostal outpouring. The most concentrated use of **ekcheo** (9x/16 total) is in chapter 16 of Revelation which describes the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath (Rev 16:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 17+). What a striking contrast - either God pours out His Spirit of grace on believers or He pours out (via His angels) His righteous wrath on earth dwellers (unbelievers). And thus the importance of responding to the invitation in Acts 2:21! To say it another way the LAST DAYS begins with an outpouring of the Spirit, but will end with an outpouring of God's wrath! Call on the Name Jesus, for as Paul said it is "**Jesus, Who rescues us from the wrath to come.**" (1 Th 1:10+).

This division of **last days** into a time of the Spirit of grace and a time of divine judgment in the "last" of the **last days** reminds us of the prophecy in Isaiah 61:2 which says "To proclaim (GOOD NEWS) the favorable year of the LORD and (BAD NEWS) the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn." Jesus quoted the first part in His first message in the synagogue in Nazareth (Lk 4:16-20+) ending His message with the declaration "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Lk 4:21). At that time He did not quote the phrase "**the day of vengeance of our God**" for that day, like the time described in Acts 2:19-20, described a yet to be fulfilled future day of God's fury poured out on a Christ rejecting world.

Note that this same verb **ekcheo** is used in the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10 (in the Septuagint) which is a prophecy that will not be fulfilled until the last of the "last days," most likely the last half of Daniel's Seventieth Week, the time of Jacob's Distress

"I will pour out (Lxx = ekcheo) on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10-14+)

This section of conviction and contrition is followed by God's provision of salvation Zechariah 13:1+ recording "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.

Comment: In short, those on whom the Spirit is poured out are Jews who will be saved, Zechariah 13:8+ indicating that 2/3's of the Jews will perish, but 1/3 will be saved (cf "all Israel will be saved" - Ro 11:26+).

Mankind (4561) (**sarx**) is literally "flesh" so the KJV translates it "**on all flesh**." One way to interpret this in the present age would be to interpret it as signifying God would not just pour forth His Spirit on Jewish believers but on Gentile believers, on males and females, on rich and poor. Speaking of regeneration (of men and women who are born again) Paul writes God "poured out (the Spirit) upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." (Titus 3:6, cf Ro 5:5+) All mankind who believes in Jesus will receive the Holy Spirit (cf Ro 8:9+).

James Smith on pouring out of the Spirit - At the marriage at Cana, the best wine—the gift of Christ—was kept to the *last*. So in "**these last days**" the best wine has been given in the coming of the Holy Ghost. Between this promise made to Joel and the fulfillment there lay twenty-four generations; but His faithfulness faileth not. The Spirit has been given, but "**all flesh**" have not yet been touched with the flame of this life-quickenning fire. But surely this also will come to pass. Let us join the Lord's remembrancers, and pray for it. The testimony of a living Church must be to God's faithfulness to His Word. (Handfuls on Purpose)

W A Criswell - The eschatological prophecies of Joel envisioned a day like Pentecost and the speaking in various languages (Joel 2:28). The key phrase here is "all flesh" (Acts 2:17). These words mean that the Spirit of God would come upon all people without discrimination: young, old, servants, women, and other groups ordinarily omitted. The messianic era has been inaugurated, though its climactic fulfillment is yet in the future.

Guzik quips that in the past "the Holy Spirit was given in drops, now He is poured forth!" (Acts 2 Commentary)

ESV Study Bible has an interesting note that "Most rabbis believed that the Spirit had ceased speaking through human prophets with the last of the OT prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). Joel's prophecy of an outpouring of the Spirit **on all flesh** was understood as referring to a new messianic age."

Ray Pritchard on pour out My Spirit - Let's break that sentence down for a moment:

I—the sovereignty of God.

Will—the determination of God.

Pour Out—the generosity of God.

My Spirit—the personality of God.

This is one of the greatest statements in the Bible. This is how God ignites kingdom life in his people. He pours out his Spirit on them and they are never the same again. When God promises to "pour out" the Spirit, this is more than a trickle. It means that God plans to release the floodgates of heaven into the human heart. No man can do this on his own. I can preach for hours, but I cannot pour out God's Spirit upon you. This is not the result of church membership or the organized aspects of local church life. This is God doing what only God can do. I think that's part of what Donald Miller had in mind. We must individually go to God for this outpouring, and he must come to us with the power of his Spirit. Unless that happens, we will never be changed. And when that does happen, we will never be the same again. (I Will Pour Out My Spirit on All People)

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams - A number of commentators interpret these descriptions as representative of the different classes of people on whom the Spirit will be poured out. In other words, those who will receive the Spirit include male and female, young and old, those who are poor both men and women (bondslaves in Acts 2:18).

Some like **John MacArthur** feel that "It is only in those days (ED: THE FUTURE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM) that such extensive prophesying will take place. The nature of the **prophesying, dreams, and visions** that will take place remains a mystery. **Prophecy** was exercised in the early church (cf. Acts 21:8-11) and continues in a non-revelatory sense throughout this age." (Ibid)

It is notable that the 120 disciples on whom the Spirit had been poured out did include men and women and in one sense they were prophesying because filled with the Spirit they were speaking forth **the mighty deeds of God**. (Acts 2:11)

G Campbell Morgan wrote " In Joel's prophecy then we have a description of the whole dispensation of the Spirit; its **commencement** " I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh;" its **characteristics**" - Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit"; its **consummation**-before the great day of the Lord come-" I will shew wonders in the heavens...The day of Pentecost dispensationally, is that whole period following, during which the true characteristics are those of prophecy, and of dreams and visions. The Day of Pentecost finally, is that period when, before the final acts begin, supernatural signs will indicate the end of the period, and the approach of God's new and last method with the world. Where then are we placed now? The **dawn** has passed away. The **day** is proceeding. The **darkness** has not yet come. **Dawn:** " I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh." **Day:** " Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams, yea, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy." **Darkness:** "The great and notable day...the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." That has not yet come. This prophetic teaching should make us cease speaking of the day of Pentecost as though it were passed. This is the day of Pentecost. The dawn has passed, but who regrets the dawn when the sun has climbed to, the heavens? Sometimes we think that it is westering; that the shadows are already about us. It would seem that we are approaching the end of this dispensation of grace; but there is no sorrow in our heart, there is no regret. We do not believe that this dispensation is the last activity of God for the world. Our hope is also in the movements that lie beyond it; in the fact that He will gather Judah to Jerusalem, and Israel to Himself (ED: "ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED" Ro 11:26+), and in other ways proceed to the accomplishment of His purpose. The whole subject is not for consideration now, but what it is important to remember is that this very age in which we live and serve, is part of God's plan, but not the whole of it. It is an integral part of the whole. God has never been trying experiments with humanity. He has been moving surely, certainly on, and this age in which we live and serve is part of a larger whole. We need not sigh for the **dawn**; we thank God for it, and the story of its breaking always fascinates us. We need not waste time looking for the ending of the age; for ere it come there will be supernatural signs that herald its approach. (Acts Commentary 2:14-21)

Prophecy (4395) (**propheteuo** from **pró** = before or forth + **phemí** = tell) means literally to tell forth and can mean to speak forth God's message, not necessarily referring to speaking of future events. In other contexts to prophesy means to speak under inspiration and foretell future events. Luke uses this verb 4 times in Acts - Acts 2:17, 18, Acts 19:6 and Acts 21:9.

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and **prophesying**.

Acts 21:9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who were **prophetesses**

Darrell Bock on **visions** and **dreams** - In both cases the point is that God will be accessible to and direct his people. Later in Acts, Paul will be led by a vision (Acts 16:9–10), and Cornelius and Peter each have a vision that sets up their meeting (Acts 9:10; 10:3, 10, 17; 18:9; Harrison 1975: 58). (Ibid)

One **caveat** regarding **prophecy, visions and dreams** is that they each must be scrupulously, assiduously gauged according to the perfect standard of the Word of God (Pr 30:5). If they are not in accord with the Word of God or if they propose supposed "new" revelation, then they are false prophecies, visions and dreams. In short, a Berean-like attitude (Acts 17:11+) is imperative in assessing all prophecies, visions and dreams.

Visions (3706)(**horasis** from **horao** = to see) means that which is seen and means appearance in Rev 4:3+ and (supernatural) vision in Acts 2:17 and Rev 9:17+ (all the NT uses).

Horasis is used frequently in the **Septuagint** and is especially concentrated in the apocalyptic books of Ezekiel and Daniel where it often describes supernatural visions. Clearly God sometimes spoke to His prophets in the OT in visions (Isa 1:1, Da 7:1, 8:1, etc). So the question is this - Does God still give visions? Clearly God does not give visions today in the same sense as He did to the OT prophets who recorded the visions as the **inspired Word of God** (special revelation). So while the omnipotent God clearly can still give **visions**, He does not give **visions** to give new revelation. All **visions** must be compared to the Word of God and must be compatible with the Word of God. See the article from Gotquestions - Is God giving people in closed countries dreams and visions to bring them to faith in Christ?

Dream (1797)(**enupniazomai**) means to receive an impression of seeing something during sleep (Acts 2:17) and in Jude 1:8 is associated with promoting deluding teachings as a result of false dreams. This verb is much more frequent in the **Septuagint** - e.g., Jacob's ladder (Ge 28:12), Joseph's dream (Ge 37:5, 6, 9, 10). Warnings

about dreamers in Dt 13:1, 3, 5 if they tell you to go after other gods (Dt 13:2). Nebuchadnezzar's famous dream (Da 2:1, 3+).

Euphrazoi - 20x in the **Septuagint** -

Gen. 28:12; Gen. 37:5; Gen. 37:6; Gen. 37:9; Gen. 37:10; Gen. 41:5; Deut. 13:1; Deut. 13:3; Deut. 13:5; Jdg. 7:13 - Gideon; Isa. 29:7; Isa. 29:8; Isa. 56:10; Jer. 23:25; Jer. 27:9; Jer. 29:8; Da 2:1; Da 2:3; Joel 2:28 = "**Your old men will dream dreams.**"

Dreams (1798) (**enupnion**) means something seen in one's sleep. This word is much more common in the **Septuagint** where it can refer to a common dream or a prophetic dream and is especially concentrated in the prophetic book of Daniel (24/107) and in Genesis (19/107).

When **C H Spurgeon** was about 34 years old, he preached a sermon on Acts 2:17 entitled **A Young Man's Vision** and here are some excerpts showing what Spurgeon thought of **dreams** and **visions** in our day, including a vision that he himself had -

MANY visions have led to the most disastrous results. When Napoleon had a vision of a universal monarchy over which he should preside, with the French eagle for his ensign, he drenched the lands in blood. Many visions have been wretchedly delusive. Men have dreamed of finding the fairy pleasure in the dark forest of sin; carnal joys have danced before their eyes as temptingly as the mirage in the desert, and they have pursued the phantom forms to their misery in this world, and to their eternal ruin in the next. Mistaking license for liberty, and madness for mirth, they have dreamed themselves into hell! Many dreams have sucked the life-blood out of men as vampires do; men have passed from stern reality into dreamland, and while seemingly awake have continued like sleepwalkers to do all things in their sleep. Many pass all their days in one perpetual daydream—speculating, building castles in the air, thinking of what they would do, and vowing how they would behave themselves. With fine capacities they have driveled away existence, as their theory of life was born of smoke, so the result of their lives has been a cloud. The luxurious indolence of mere resolve, the useless tossing of regrets—these have been all their sluggard life. For all this, good and grand visions are not unknown; visions which came from the excellent glory; visions which, when young or old men have seen them, have filled them with wisdom, divine grace, and holiness; visions which have worked with such effect upon their minds that they have been lifted up above the level of the sons of men, and made sons of God, co-workers with the eternal! Such visions are given to men whose eyes have been illumined by the Holy Spirit—visions which have come of that eyesalve which only the Holy Spirit can apply; visions which are not bestowed on carnal men nor unveiled to the impure in heart; visions reserved for the men and women elect of God who are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and made meet to be partakers of the witness of God, and the testimony of His Son....How much of good in this world would have been lost if good men had quenched the first half-fashioned thoughts which have flitted before them! I mean, for instance, had Martin Luther taken the advice of his teacher when he said to him, "Go your way, silly monk! Go to your cell and pray God, and if it is His will, He will reform the abuses of this church, but what have you to do with it?" Supposing the agitated monk had administered an opiate to his soul, what then? Doubtless the gospel to Luther at the first was dim enough; and the idea of reform most vague and indistinct; but had he closed his heart to his vision, how long might not the Romish darkness have brooded over the multitudes of Europe?....

O young men, if you have received a thought which dashes ahead of your times, hold to it, and work at it till it comes to something! If you have dreamed a dream from the Lord, turn it over and over again till you are quite sure it is not steam from a heated brain, or smoke from hell—and when it is clear to your own heart that it is fire from off God's altar, then work and pray and wait your time. Perhaps it may take 50 years to work that thought out, or what is worse, you may never live to see it realized, but what of that? You may have to leave that thought sown in the dust, but the thought will not die; it may produce a harvest when you are with the angels! Do not, I pray you, because the thing happens to seem new, or too enthusiastic, or too far ahead, be snubbed into putting it into a corner, but take care of it, and nurture it; and if it is not of God, a little experience will disabuse you of it, let us hope. But if it is of the Lord, you will grow in your attachment to it, and by-and-by God will find an opportunity for you to make it practical. The great Father of Spirits does, in fact, say to you when He puts a great design into your keeping, as Pharaoh's daughter said to Jochebed, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." And though the Moses that you nurse may not deliver Israel in your lifetime, yet shall you have your wages if you nurse the thought for God!....

With this rather too long preface about dreaming, **I will now confess that, after my own fashion, I too have seen a vision.** And though you should say of me in days to come, "Behold, this dreamer comes," yet, as he that has a dream is bid to tell his dream, so I tell mine. My dream is this—**I have seen in vision, missionary spirit in England,** now so given to slumber, marvelously quickened, awakened, and revived! I have seen—the wish

was father to the sight, I have seen the ardor of our first missionary days return to us! I have seen young men eager for the mission field, and old men and fathers sitting in united council to correct mistakes, to devise new methods, or to strengthen the old ones, so that by any means the great chariot of Christ might roll onwards, and that His victories might be more rapid. (For full text see **A Young Man's Vision**)

G Campbell Morgan on prophesying, dreaming and seeing visions - What is a **vision**? Something seen by a watcher. What is a **dream**? Something seen by a sleeper. **Visions** are for the young men, who should be watching. **Dreams** are for the old men, who should be resting. The New Testament prophet is a witness in speech, and the prophets are to be men and women, bond and free. This Spirit came to scorch and burn and destroy the false divisions which existed; He came to recognize humanity, irrespective of caste or sex; sons and daughters, bondslaves and bondmaidens. What are the things we need to fear supremely? First, silence. If we cannot speak (not necessarily to a crowd) for our Master, wherever the opportunity is given, then we should be afraid. **The Spirit was poured out to give us power to prophesy.** Let us be very afraid of silence. We need also to fear if there is an absence of visions and dreams. If we have no dreams and no visions, why not? It is because we are not responsive to the Spirit. If we do not do this, it is not merely that we fail. We limit God; for the marvellous and matchless mystery of the Pentecostal age is this—that while the Spirit is on all flesh, He waits for a partner, and the partner must be a man, a woman, a child. God bring us into fellowship that we may give His message and hasten the Kingdom. (Acts Commentary 2:14-21)

John Piper on "all God's people will prophesy" -

Joel goes on to say that when God makes himself known and felt in people's lives, this can manifest itself in three ways: they may dream dreams, see visions, and prophesy (Joel 2:28). What a person dreams about is a sign of what his mind is saturated with. What looms up in his mind's eye while strolling alone signals whether he is soaked in God. And you can usually tell whether a person has been drenched with the Spirit by whether his mouth is given to declaring the excellencies of God. When God almighty pours himself into an individual, the inner life is changed; it is filled with God. And since the mouth is simply the pressure valve of the inner life, when the inner life is full of God, the mouth prophesies.

We must not think of prophecy mainly as prediction, though it is true that those who are closest to God will know best what he is likely to do next. Nor should we think of it as the fulfillment of a special office.

Prophecy, as it is used here I think, is primarily verbalizing the great things you have seen of God for the sake of "upbuilding and encouragement and consolation," as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:3. Joel is not trying to get us excited that we will all one day be able to know the future before it happens (there is nothing especially holy about that). **He is looking to a day when men and women everywhere will be so filled with God that they catch visions of him in the daytime, dream about him at night, and speak of him continually with their mouths.** The best evidence for this is that when in fact the Spirit was poured out like this at Pentecost, the result was that those filled with the Spirit "**spoke the mighty works of God**" (Acts 2:11). The miracle of "tongues" enabled all to understand, but the important thing is what they said. Tongues is just one variety of prophetic speech. This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Joel wasn't the only Old Testament prophet who longed for the day when God would saturate his people with his Spirit. There is a story about Moses in Numbers 11:24–30, similar to Joel's prophecy. Moses had the Spirit of the Lord on him in such a way that he could see God and speak his word powerfully. It says that one day "the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was upon him and put it upon the 70 elders; and when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied" (Nu 11:25). And word came to them that there were two men in the city who had not come out to the tent but were prophesying by the Spirit also. Joshua said to Moses "'My lord Moses, forbid them.' But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? **Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!**" (Nu 11:29). **That is the day Joel is predicting—the day when all God's people will prophesy. Would that all the Lord's people were prophets! Would that all the people at Bethlehem were prophets! So saturated and soaked with God, so filled with God in the inner life that we would constantly speak to each other of the excellencies of our Maker and Redeemer and Friend.**

And do not think this is beyond your reach. Do not think that such an experience of God is for the professional spiritual elite. **The point of Joel's prophecy is this: the Spirit will be poured on all flesh—whether you are man or woman, old or young, servant or master, the promise is for you.** Baptists have always insisted on the priesthood of all believers. **But should we not also say, Would that all God's people were prophets!** Would that all God's people were so filled with God that our love and admiration could not but spill over into words. Would that every Wednesday night and every Sunday night we might come together so deeply moved

by the Spirit that we would fall over each other to testify in prophetic words of edifying praise to what we have seen of God.

What is it that hinders us? What is it in our tradition that has locked us into ourselves and imprisoned us in solitary cells of silence? Why, why in the name of Pentecost are we so reticent to speak of God when opportunity is given the church and beyond? I don't know why. But this I know: it is not the Spirit; it is not the Spirit of God that seals your lips and makes you think that praise and exhortation is a private affair. "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying; test everything, hold to what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19–21). God declares, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy!" (Acts 2:17 This Is What Was Spoken By the Prophet Joel)

Cornerstone Biblical Commentary - The outpouring is for prophesying, for receiving dreams and visions. Visions and dreams were common experiences by which a prophet would receive revelation (Num 12:6). In Acts they occur regularly, especially in promoting the advance of the Christian mission (e.g., Acts 9:10, 12; 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 16:9; 18:9). While some would limit early Christian prophecy to "episodic, oracular utterances that are spoken on the basis of supernaturally given revelation via dreams, visions, and angelic visitors," others see prophecy in Acts as occurring across a continuum of varying degrees of divine intervention (Giles 1997b:971). Indeed, the "prophesying" of Joel 2:28 is fulfilled at Pentecost in "witnessing with power" (Acts 1:8) and in being "filled with the Holy Spirit" to declare miraculously in foreign languages the "wonderful things God has done" (Acts 2:4, 11). Throughout Acts, we meet this same range of Spirit-aided proclamation: from oracular prediction or assurance (Acts 11:28; 18:9-10; 21:11; 23:11) to special revelation passed on later (Acts 10:30-33), episodic immediate inspiration (Acts 4:18-31; 13:9; 21:11), speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6), words of exhortation and encouragement (Acts 14:22; 15:32, 41), and boldly preached expository sermons with Spirit-given interpretation and application of Scripture (Acts 4:8-12; 7:2-52; 13:16-41). By the power of the Spirit, God's witnesses will make known his wondrous deeds: how he has accomplished and now intends to apply his salvation. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 12: Luke and Acts)

MacArthur - The complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy awaits the coming of the millennial kingdom. On the Day of Pentecost, and indeed throughout the church age, God has given both a preview and a sample of the power the Spirit will release in the kingdom. Believers in the present age have a foretaste of kingdom life. In the millennial kingdom, God will pour forth of [His] Spirit upon all mankind, since all who enter the kingdom will be redeemed. (See Mt. 24:29-25:46 for the evidence that only redeemed people will enter the Millennium.) During the church age, God pours **His Spirit** into believers (cf. Ro 5:5+ Titus 3:5-6+ = "the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,"). In the kingdom there will be perfect peace (Isa. 9:7); peace rules now in the hearts of believers. In the kingdom, Christ will reign (Luke 1:33); He reigns now in the hearts of His people. In the kingdom, Christ will judge all men (Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1); now He judges His people through the Spirit's convicting ministry in their lives. What will ultimately come to full fruition in the kingdom began to be seen at Pentecost. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

Wiersbe - Peter did not say that Pentecost was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32, because the **signs** and **wonders** predicted (Acts 2:19, 20) had not occurred. When you read Joel's prophecy in context, you see that it deals with the nation of Israel in the end times, in connection with "**the Day of the Lord.**" However, Peter was led by the Spirit to see in the prophecy an application to the Church. He said, "This is that same Holy Spirit that Joel wrote about. He is here!" Such an announcement would seem incredible to the Jews, because they thought God's Spirit was given only to a few select people (see Nu 11:28-29). But here were 120 of their fellow Jews, men and women, enjoying the blessing of the same Holy Spirit that had empowered Moses, David, and the prophets. (Ibid)

William MacDonald offers a literal interpretation of Acts 2:17-18 (which I basically agree)- The quotation from Joel is an example of the Law of Double Reference, by which a Bible prophecy has a partial fulfillment at one time and a complete fulfillment at a later time. The Spirit of God was poured out at Pentecost but not literally on all flesh. The final fulfillment of the prophecy will take place at the end of the Tribulation Period. Prior to the glorious return of Christ, there will be wonders in the heavens, and signs on the earth (Matt. 24:29, 30). The Lord Jesus Christ will then appear on the earth to put down His enemies and to establish His kingdom. At the beginning of His thousand-year reign, the Spirit of God will be poured out on all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, and this condition will prevail, for the most part, throughout the Millennium. Various manifestations of the Spirit will be given without regard to sex, age, or social status. There will be visions and dreams, which suggest the reception of knowledge; and prophecy, which suggests its impartation to others. Thus, the gifts of revelation and communication will be in evidence. All this will occur in what Joel described as the last days (Acts 2:17). This, of course, refers to the last days of Israel and not of the church. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

H A Ironside - There is a great deal in the prophecy (FROM JOEL 2:28-32) which yet remains to be fulfilled, but Peter is saying that that same Spirit which was working on Pentecost that day is the Spirit which by and by will be poured out upon all flesh. Joel says, "It shall come to pass in the last days I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." Notice the universality of this. This is something for the whole world in that glorious millennial day, and today this coming of the Holy Ghost, this Pentecostal blessing, is for the whole world. I wonder sometimes at those who tell us that God endued only Israel with such power. He was contemplating the untold millions of Gentiles— those already born and those to be born down through the centuries— when the Spirit of God had come with the message for all of them. "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." The coming of the Spirit of God takes hold of a man or woman and gives them an illumination they would not ordinarily have; He opens up to them the Old Testament and reveals the things to come and gives them an understanding of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ and its effects upon human sin and human needs. (H. A. Ironside Commentary – Acts)

(Adapted from URL:<https://www.preceptaustin.org/acts-2-commentary#2:17>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

An aged widow. A group of women who had followed Jesus and remained in Jerusalem after his ascension. A band of four unmarried sisters. The New Testament offers these as examples of first-century women who were endowed with the gift of prophecy. Important questions exist regarding whether the spiritual gift of prophecy continues yet today (compare Zechariah 13:1-6; 1 Corinthians 13:8-12; Hebrews 1:1-2; etc.). But those questions, as important as they are, are not the focus of this lesson. The focus, rather, is on using one's giftedness in answering God's call to ministry. As one observer put it, "When the church is working properly, every woman as well as every man will be using at least one spiritual gift in ministry to others in the body of Christ" (see also 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 and 1 Peter 4:10).

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Prophets is the biblical title given to female prophets in Scripture. The prophetess foretold future events or communicated as God's messenger to encourage or exhort (1 Cor. 14:3). Sadly, women were often devalued in the eyes of Jewish men— but this was never God's heart.

One Woman in the Temple - Early in Luke's Gospel, he introduced an older widow named Anna, calling her a prophetess. Anna's husband died after only seven years of marriage. Anna never married again. Instead, she surrendered the rest of her life to God's service in the temple. There she fasted, prayed, and taught those who visited the temple about the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the temple for His dedication, Anna had the privilege of beholding the precious Savior, the Expected One.

Women on the Day of Pentecost - On the Day of Pentecost, Peter delivered a powerful sermon. He clarified the fact and purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection. He also explained the strange events (tongues of fire, people speaking in a language they had not learned) which were presently occurring. Peter quoted the prophet Joel concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. This Old Testament passage foretold what would happen when Jesus ascended back to heaven: God's Spirit would be poured out on God's people. Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit operated periodically on special designated occasions. But from this day forward, all those who accepted the truth about Christ and became a Christian, housed the Holy Spirit in their bodies and became His temple. God's Spirit now dwelt in a variety of individuals: old, young, male, female, servants, even Gentiles— anyone who accepted the truth about the Savior.

Four Prophetesses - Paul visited Philip, an evangelist, in Caesarea who had four daughters. Scripture says all four daughters had the gift of prophecy. Scripture gives no further details about the daughters or concerning their ministry involvement, but tradition says they helped their father as he traveled to several cities in what is now Turkey preaching the Gospel. These women and many more are examples of God having no problem calling women to fulfill an assignment for Him. God continues to speak to—and through—women today.