

**The Book of Acts (#7);
The Day of Pentecost (2)**

This morning we continue our study of Luke's record of the day of Pentecost, when the risen and enthroned Lord Jesus baptized His people in the Holy Spirit. The 120 disciples of Jesus had been gathering and meeting together with one accord in one place. The time arrived when our Lord Jesus poured out the Spirit on His disciples. The event had been accompanied by the sound of a mighty wind. This served the Jewish people dwelling in Jerusalem to gather to the place to which the great sound of wind had drawn them. It was then that these Jewish people heard the disciples, who had been filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to them in their own languages, "as the Spirit gave them utterance." Many of these Jews were from other lands, but were in Jerusalem for the Passover. Through the speech of these uneducated and unsophisticated disciples of Galilee, they heard and understood in their own languages "the wonderful works of God". The result was that "they were "amazed and marveled", for although they had no initial understanding of what was occurring, it was apparent to everybody that God was doing a great work among them. But the local Palestinian Jews hearing the foreign languages that they did not understand, were perplexed and confused, not attributing the speaking of the disciples to the work of God in their midst, but rather, they attributed the speech of the disciples to be the gibberish of drunken men. This is what prompted Peter's sermon response to the gathered Jews, which is recorded before us. Let us read Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-36:

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷And 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.

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

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

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

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

²²"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. ²⁵For David says concerning Him:

'I foresaw the Lord always before my face,

For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.
²⁶Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.
²⁷For You will not leave my soul in Hades,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
²⁸You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’

²⁹“Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

³⁴“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
³⁵Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’

³⁶“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

We may consider Peter’s sermon before these Jews in Jerusalem in three sections. First, Peter declared that Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (vs. 14-21). Second, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ were the design and purpose of God from eternity (vs. 22-24). And third, King David had foretold the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ (vs. 25-36). We will only address the first of these three divisions today.

I. Peter declared that Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (vs. 14-21).

We will first explain the details, and then we will consider several implications for our understanding of the ways of the Lord.

A. Explaining the details and the doctrines of the passage

We read these words in **verse 14**, *“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.’”* Peter stood to speak, but he was speaking on behalf of the twelve, of which he was but one.

It was important that Peter should be recognized as not speaking in his own name, but as representing the whole body, which was itself representative of Christ, in the organization and administration of His church or kingdom.¹

And so, Peter was a spokesman not only for himself, but for himself along with the “eleven”, that is, the body of twelve apostles who were now acting as the spiritual shepherds of Israel. God had given them wisdom to understand what He was doing on this occasion. He then enabled Peter to declare and explain His action to the people.

¹ Joseph Addison Alexander, **Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles** (Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), 58.

Take note that the crowds who had gathered are set forth in two groups. There were those “men of Judah” and then there were “all those who dwell in Jerusalem.” As we had indicated last Lord’s Day, Jerusalem’s population was greatly enlarged during this period of time, having traveled to Jerusalem in order to observe the feast of Pentecost according to the Mosaic law. But they had also perhaps resided in Jerusalem at this time in anticipation of the appearance of the Messiah, which was an expectation of most Jewish people at this stage of their history.

Peter’s opening words were a rebuttal of the false charge of some of the Jews to whom the foreign languages were unintelligible; to them the disciples were simply drunk. But Peter declared in **verse 15**, “*For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.*” It was but 9:00 in the morning, three hours since sunrise. Public drunkenness would not have taken place at this time of day—they were not drunk.

After rebutting the false assertion of some of the Jews who had regarded the scene characterized by confusion and commotion, Peter declared and explained the truth to them. These Jewish disciples of Jesus, who were speaking languages unknown to them, were fulfilling biblical prophecy. We read in **verse 16**, “*But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.*” Peter’s speech interprets Joel’s words

“as showing that Jesus is now enthroned as Lord of all by the Father, and the outpouring of the Spirit is the sign that the eschatological age announced by Joel has begun...”

Joel’s eschatology is being realized in the events of Pentecost and the life and growth of the believing community. That is why it is appropriate to speak of the “last days”, ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (Acts 2:17; Isa. 2:2): the ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus have inaugurated the final (messianic) period of history in which the Spirit is given to all God’s people. This is ‘not the end of time, but the time of the end.’²

Peter cited **Joel 2:28-32**. Here are verses 17 through 21 of Acts 2.

¹⁷And 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.

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

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

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

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

Peter began to quote Joel’s prophecy with **verse 17**: “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God.*” The Holy Spirit moved Peter to declare that the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled in this church age. He referred to this age as “the last days.” The Greek text reads, “ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (*en tais eschatais haymerais*). The adjective, ἐσχάταις (*eschatais*), is the Greek word from which we derive the word, eschaton, or eschatological, which simply means “last.” Here it refers to “the last days.” Peter

² Steve Walton, Word Biblical Commentary; Acts 1-9:42, 37A (Zondervan Academic, 2024), :

declared that the events of the day of Pentecost, which signaled the onset of this church age, were the commencement of the “last days” prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures.

This exact expression in Greek—the last days—is used in two other places in the New Testament. Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 6:1ff** these words:

But know this, that *in the last days* perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

And in **James 5:1-3** we read,

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! ²Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure *in the last days*.

The term, last days, encompasses the entire period of history from the resurrection of Jesus Christ unto His second coming.

Aside from these three occurrences of the two word expression, “last days”, we also read of the adjective ἐσχάταις (*eschatais*) in several other places, which clearly refer to the same time frame, but with slightly different wording.

Hebrews 1:1-3. “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ²has *in these last days* spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”

1 Peter 1:20. “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest *in these last times* for you.”

2 Peter 3:1-4. “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ²that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, ³knowing this first: that scoffers will come *in the last days*, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”

1 John 2:18. “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is *the last hour*.”

Once again we state very clearly and strongly, the last days spoken of in the Bible began with the crucifixion, resurrection, and enthronement of the Lord Jesus, and these last days continue throughout this church age until the second coming of Jesus Christ. We are living and serving in the last days--the promised days of the realized kingdom of God foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures, our Old Testament. We will see this repeatedly emphasized in the book of Acts, that this church age is the kingdom age promised in the Old Testament to King David and the nation of Israel. We are living in the eschatological kingdom, the messianic kingdom that was declared by the prophets. The time period for the last days is the entirety of this present church age.

Now most evangelicals have been taught, and they believe quite strongly, that “the last days” mentioned in the New Testament refer to a short period of time before the second coming of Christ. You will hear frequently the claim that we are living in “the last days.” But what they mean is that we are living

at a time in which the coming of Christ is not far in the future. They are not referring to the last days as it is set forth in the Scriptures, days which encompass this entire church age. They also have been taught to believe that the promised messianic kingdom of the Old Testament (i.e. the promised kingdom of David) is a future literal 1,000 year earthly Jewish kingdom that will not be established until the second coming of Jesus Christ. But the New Testament clearly declares that the kingdom promised to David and revealed through the prophets began to be realized in history with the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, when He became Lord of lords and King of kings. You will not understand the message and thrust of the book of Acts or understand rightly God's purposes in history until you see and embrace the truth that we are presently citizens of Zion, who are presently dwelling in "the last days", in the promised kingdom of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What had the prophet Joel foretold respecting the last days?

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;

First, Joel quoted God's words specifically. God had declared through him, "***I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh.***" Of course we read in the New Testament that it was Jesus Christ who poured out the blessed Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit who was also the Promise of the Father. But here Peter cited Joel declaring that God Himself would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. It can be argued, therefore, that this passage testifies to the deity of Jesus Christ. God poured out His Spirit; Jesus Christ poured out the Holy Spirit; therefore Jesus Christ is God.

The emphasis of the first words from Joel's prophecy is that the Spirit would be poured forth upon "all flesh." This would be the realization of Moses' desire that he had expressed long before. When the Spirit had been imparted to 70 elders of Israel to help Moses in leading the people of God, we read of two men, who were not present with the 70, nevertheless, the Spirit came upon them also. In Numbers 11 we read these words,

²⁷And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

²⁸So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!"

²⁹Then Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numb. 11:27-29).

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out upon ***all*** the disciples of the Lord Jesus. The expressed desire of Moses was realized on the day of Pentecost.

Joel's prophecy then speaks specifically the results of God imparting the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. In **verses 17 and 18** we read,

***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.***

Take note that Joel declared the Spirit would be manifested to all the people of God, including both male and female disciples and the young and old ("sons and daughters"). Even male and female servants would show forth the ministry of the Holy Spirit who will have come upon them. The Spirit would be given to all the Lord's disciples, whoever they are and wherever they might be. This event illustrates the spiritual truth asserted under the new covenant, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

We spoke last week of the revelatory gifts the Holy Spirit imparted to the people of God during the early days of this Christian era. Some men and women gave forth **prophecy**. What exactly is “prophecy?” **Simon Kistemaker** (1940-2021) wrote,

In Old Testament settings it connotes predicting the future. In the Pentecost event, foretelling the future is not evident. Another interpretation is that prophesying is equivalent to preaching. And last, “prophesying can mean to engage in praise to God (see 1 Chron. 25:3). In the early church, the prophets instructed and exhorted God’s people. Thus Luke records that Philip the evangelist “had four unmarried daughters who prophesied” (2:19).

Joel prophesied that “your young men shall see visions; your old men shall dream dreams.” God reveals Himself through **visions** and **dreams**. Now we do read of Joseph, the husband of Mary, being led of God through dreams (cf. Matt. 1:20; 2:12ff., 19, 22). However, we do not read of revelatory dreams after Pentecost. But we do read of visions (Acts 9:11ff; 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 16:9f; 1:9).

Now as we stated before, these revelatory gifts were the divine enablement to know and make known the will of God to others. These gifts were temporary and were to be used to substantiate the messengers of the gospel as having been truly authorized and sent by the Lord. These Spirit-filled disciples confirmed the reality of the claims of the gospel to unbelievers throughout the world. Through the decades of the first century, the gospel was proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire to the end that all came to understand that the kingdom of God was universal in scope, comprised of both Jewish and Gentile disciples. It was then that the presence and use of the early revelatory gifts of the Spirit became less commonplace and they diminished in frequency in the apostolic churches of the Roman empire.

After Joel spoke of the ones who would receive and manifest the Holy Spirit, he spoke of the signs and wonders that would be seen in the “last days.”

*¹⁹I will show wonders in heaven above
And signs in the earth beneath:
Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.
²⁰The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.*

Now some see these “wonders” and “signs” to be pointing to the end of the age, to the second coming of Jesus Christ. Others make a case that these words point to God’s judgment upon Jerusalem and Judea by the Romans in AD 70, when the city was ravaged and the temple destroyed. Others point to the events that had already been witnessed by the people of Jerusalem with the crucifixion of our Lord not many weeks before. As one once wrote,

The wonders and signs to be revealed in the world of nature, as described in vv. 19 and 20, may have more relevance in the present context than is sometimes realized: it was a little more than seven weeks since the people in Jerusalem had indeed seen the sun turned into darkness, during the early afternoon of the day of our Lord’s crucifixion. And on the same afternoon the paschal full moon may well have appeared blood-red in the sky as a consequence of that preternatural gloom. These were to be understood as tokens of the advent of the day of the Lord, “that great and notable day,” a day of judgment, to be sure, but more immediately the day of God’s salvation to all who invoked His name.³

We read lastly in this quotation from Joel’s prophecy these words in **verse 21**:

*And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of the Lord*

³ F. F. Bruce, **Commentary on the Book of the Acts**(Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 69.

Shall be saved.'

This is not speaking of a one-time decision or confession of faith, but it depicts a life of faith in calling upon Jesus Christ as Lord of one's life. These words look toward the final judgment of the human race. Those who had called upon the Lord in this life will be saved from God's wrath on the great day of Judgment. These were His true disciples, people of sound, persevering, saving faith. These only will be justified by God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone on the last day of judgment.^t

B. Considering the implications and application of the passage

1. The issue arises as to what is normative for this church age.

There are those that read this passage and assume that what Joel had prophesied would take place in the last days should or must take place among the people of God in every place and at all times throughout this church age. There are many charismatic and Pentecostal people and groups who claim extrabiblical revelation, that is, direct communication from God of His will to His people, especially those who have been "anointed by God." This passage is used to bolster deceivers and charlatans. They claim to have a relationship with God that is unique and special, which elevates them in their estimation of themselves, and their claims are used to exalt themselves in the eyes of people. These people commonly deny the sufficiency of Holy Scripture to lead and direct the people of God in the will of God. Where extra biblical revelation is sought and given credibility, the authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture suffers. They will often say, "The Bible records what God said thousands of years ago, but what we need now are fresh words from God."

Now we assert that the revelatory gifts of prophecy, tongues, and word of knowledge dissipated and disappeared in the sub-apostolic age, however we do not limit God in what He might choose to do. There are testimonies—many testimonies—of people in pagan or Islamic lands that testify as to having come to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation through an initial dream or vision they had of Jesus. I am not wise enough to clearly assess these claims, and I am not foolish enough to say that God will not do what He intends to do. We would assert, however, regardless of the claims of visions or dreams, if that soul so affected is brought to repentance from sin, faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and comes to embrace the Bible as the only inerrant, authoritative Word of God in all matters of faith and practice, we should rejoice in what the Lord has done.

But we would also suggest that signs and wonders wrought before our eyes are no true evidence that the experience is of God or that the experience authenticates a man or woman as a legitimate spokesman for God. Jesus gave a warning that people should take to heart: "an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign." He warned His disciples, "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24). Since the days of the apostles, signs and wonders performed may be a true indicator of a false prophet and teacher, rather than someone to whom the Lord has truly called and equipped as His messenger.

2. The issue regarding women involved in public ministry of the Word arises due to the passage in Acts 2.

Peter in quoting Joel's prophecy declared,

¹⁷And 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.

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

The Lord baptized all of His disciples with the Holy Spirit and all of them were gifted on the day of Pentecost speaking forth the “wonderful works of God” in foreign languages. Both males and females were baptized in the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ, and they all spoke the wondrous works of God to others who gathered about them. But how do we understand this in the light of instructions we find elsewhere in the word of God that clearly limits what women can say or do in the gathered church. For example, we read in 2 Timothy 2:8-13,

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; ⁹in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. ¹¹Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹²And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

But here in Acts 2 we read that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon “daughters” and “handmaidens” and they spoke in foreign languages the wonderful works of God to others. How do we understand and explain these matters?

Of course we read in the book of Acts of people whom God had gifted with revelatory gifts. We read of Agabus in Acts 11:28, “Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.” We read of him later in Acts 21:10,

“And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”

And we read about Philip, a noted deacon in the early church, who had four daughters, each with the gift of prophecy. This is also recorded in Acts 21.

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. ⁹Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. (Acts 21:8f)

How, then, do we understand and explain these matters? First, we should affirm the passivity of the gifted persons making known the will of God. With the revelatory gifts of speaking in tongues (foreign languages), giving forth a “word of knowledge”⁴ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8), or declaring a “prophetic utterance”, the gifted person was not injecting his or her own thoughts or words, but God Himself was using the voice of that gifted person to speak forth His word. And so, if a woman had the gift of prophecy, she would speak with her voice, but it was actually God directly controlling her thoughts and voice to convey exactly the truth He wanted to communicate. She, then, would not be formally teaching men or the gathered church, but God was using her voice to communicate His will to His people.

But as we said earlier, this revelatory gift of prophecy (and tongues and the gift of knowledge) were temporary gifts and they diminished in use over time. As the apostolic age ended, the revelatory gifts ceased to be seen and used. Indeed, what Paul had declared in 1 Corinthians 13:8 came to pass: “But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.”

But even when these gifted women did speak, or pray, they were to show themselves to be humble, submissive, and obedient to their husbands. And so, we read in 1 Corinthians 11 these words of instruction,

⁴ God speaking forth through a human voice a matter unknown to that human speaker.

Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. ³But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. ⁵But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. ⁶For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. (1 Cor. 11:2-6)

Again, we would say that the woman who “prophesies” in the church was wholly passive, that God had gifted her with this prophetic gift through whom the Lord would speak forth His word, to which she would not add or contribute her own opinion or conviction about matters. The Holy Spirit spoke forth His word through her. But even though she was passive in the exercise of this gift, she was to show forth her humility and submission to her husband and the men among whom she served. Again, Paul wrote, “But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.” It was only dishonoring for her to pray or prophecy in the church if her head was uncovered. If her head was properly covered, it was perfectly acceptable for her to “pray or prophesy.”

Why was there an emphasis on the need to have head covered? For two reasons. First, in order to show forth her role as a wife submissive and under the head of her husband (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3). Secondly, in order to distinguish herself from those women who were rebellious and self-willed in their relationship to their husbands. In the first century Roman Empire, and particularly in pagan Corinth, there were many pagan temples in which very immoral practices were performed in their pagan worship. The temples had both female and male temple prostitutes, who were involved with “worshippers” before their pagan deities. One of the ways in which the women temple prostitutes were identified was that they would shave their heads. The church at Corinth had many converts from pagan Corinth, and some had converted to Christ who had repented of their former lifestyle, then baptized and joined the church. But for a time they had retained their former appearance even as they were once again growing their hair longer. These women were to wear a head covering to show forth their true desire and nature to conform and live as a Christian wife and sister in the church. Later in 1 Corinthians 11:15 Paul stated that the Lord Himself had provided a natural cover to show forth a woman’s godly role and attitude. Paul wrote in conclusion of this teaching these words:

Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? ¹⁵But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; ***for her hair is given to her for a covering.*** ¹⁶But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

Now it is true that throughout church history women have practiced wearing hats or veils to church. That has fallen off as a practice in the last generation. But my mother has told me in the past that during those years of WWII you would not see a “decent” woman walking on the sidewalk of San Francisco who was not wearing a hat and gloves. Now we are not calling for a return to those days, but we would assert strongly that our culture would greatly benefit having a clear, visible, distinction between men and women and boys and girls. May men be masculine and women be feminine! Let us at least be true to this principle in the church.

But what of 1 Corinthians 14:34? The apostle Paul gave this instruction to the church at Corinth: “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says” (1 Cor. 14:34). Some see this as an overarching principle, that it prohibits any Christian woman from speaking in a church service in any way whatsoever. But if that were the case, then how do you explain the qualified use of the revelatory gifts by gifted women in the church in that apostolic age?

The answer (in my opinion) is that the context of 1 Corinthians 14 is not seriously considered by those who hold that position and practice of total prohibition of women speaking. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul was addressing how the revelatory gifts were to be used in the local church setting. Those with the gift of prophecy were given opportunity to stand and speak forth a prophetic word that they claimed and believed to

have been given them by God. The problem existed, however, that not all who spoke gave true and legitimate words from God. And so, every prophet after speaking would be evaluated in the church by others with the gift of prophesy, to determine if the utterance were truly of God. We read this in 1 Corinthians 14:26ff.

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. ³⁰But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³²And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

³⁴Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. ³⁵And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church. (1 Cor. 11:26-35)⁵

When a prophetic utterance was to be evaluated, the women were not permitted to stand and pass judgment as to whether or not it was legitimately of God. They were to be silent during this evaluation and examination process. 1 Corinthians 14:34 must be seen in context, in which it restricts women from this role. Understanding this verse in this way results in no conflict of understanding the giftedness of women on the day of Pentecost, the women who had been given the gift of prophecy, or women who prayed in a church setting, if their head were covered; that is, if they were humble, godly, and honoring of their husbands.

⁵ Someone might reason that 1 Corinthians 14:34 begins a new paragraph and therefore should not be seen as connected with the prior verses. However, recall that the early Greek manuscripts had very little consistent punctuation, and no verse divisions or even spaces between words. The Greek letters were run together on a scroll because of the scarcity and expense of writing material. The sentence, paragraph, and chapter divisions were created by translators, not the original writers of the New Testament documents.