

What is a prophetess?

A prophetess is a female prophet. The word prophet comes from the Greek word prophetes, which means “spokesman.” A prophet in the Bible is a person who proclaims God’s Word and therefore speaks for God—a spokesman for God. A prophetess was, therefore, a spokeswoman for God. The faithful prophet or prophetess was one who, regardless of whether or not he or she was listened to, spoke everything God said to speak. There are several prophetesses mentioned in the Bible.

In the Old Testament we have Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses, who was a prophetess (Exodus 15:20). Deborah was another prophetess, and she was also the only woman that we know of to judge Israel (Judges 4:4). Another prophetess in the Bible is Huldah, who lived in Jerusalem during the reign of King Josiah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22). As Josiah was making reforms in Judah, he found a copy of the Law in the temple. He read it and was troubled over his nation’s disobedience. Josiah inquired of the Lord through Huldah the prophetess. Huldah prophesied a disaster that God would bring upon Judah for its idolatry, but Josiah, because of his humility and tender heart before God, would go to his grave in peace and not see the disaster (2 Chronicles 34:19-28). An unnamed prophetess is mentioned in Isaiah 8:1-4. This prophetess bore Isaiah’s son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, whose name was prophetic.

In the New Testament, another prophetess, Anna, is mentioned in Luke 2. Anna was a widow who spent her days in the temple fasting and praying (Luke 2:36-37). When Mary and Joseph presented the infant Jesus in the temple, Anna immediately recognized Jesus for who He was—the Messiah. She began to give thanks to God and to speak about Jesus to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem (verse 38). Four more prophetesses are mentioned in Acts 21:9. The four virgin daughters of Philip the evangelist were known

for their prophecies. We aren't told the content of their prophecies, but it's likely that some of the prophecies concerned Paul's visit to Jerusalem and pending arrest.

The Bible also mentions two false prophetesses, women who claimed to speak God's word but were lying. One of these false prophetesses is a woman named Noadiah who was part of the conspiracy to make Nehemiah afraid to follow God (Nehemiah 6:14). The other is an unnamed false prophetess referred to as "Jezebel" in Revelation 2:20; this Jezebel-like woman was teaching the church at Thyatira to follow idols and leading them into sexual immorality.

The Bible tells us that prophecies will be spoken in the last days by both men and women, young and old, regardless of social status, as God pours out His Spirit (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). This was seen on the Day of Pentecost, when God bypassed the priests and scribes and spoke to the people of Jerusalem through the "common" people of the fledgling church, much to everyone's amazement (Acts 2:12; 4:13).