



Women in the Old Testament and Early Church

Women have served as rulers such as Deborah, Athaliah, Queen of Sheba, and Candace. Isaiah 3:12; Judges 4:4.

"O My people! Their oppressors are children, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who guide you lead you astray And confuse the direction of your paths." (Isaiah 3:12, NASB)

"Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time." (Judges 4:4, NASB)

Women have been poets such as Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Elisabeth, and Mary. Women have been prophets such as Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, Anna, Philip's daughters, and false prophets as well. Ezek. 13:17-23.

"Now you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their own inspiration. Prophecy against them and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the women who sew magic bands on all wrists and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature to hunt down lives! Will you hunt down the lives of My people, but preserve the lives of others for yourselves?"' (Ezekiel 13:17-18, NASB)

Women have been involved in business. Prov. 31:14-18; Prov. 31:24.

"She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens. She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong. She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night." (Proverbs 31:14-18, NASB)

"She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies belts to the tradesmen." (Proverbs 31:24, NASB)

Women were given property rights of inheritance in Numbers 27:1-11 and to sell property in Ruth 4:3-9.

"The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father's brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them. Further, you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter.'" (Numbers 27:7-8, NASB)

"Then he said to the closest relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab, has to sell the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. "So I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem it." Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."'" (Ruth 4:3-5, NASB)

Women had separate apartments in dwelling and took part in ancient worship. Gen. 24:67; Exodus 15:20.

"Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." (Genesis 24:67, NASB)



“Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.” (Exodus 15:20, NASB)

Women took part in ancient choir. Women worshipped in separate compartments. 1 Chron. 25:5-6; Exodus 38:8.

“All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer to exalt him according to the words of God, for God gave fourteen sons and three daughters to Heman. All these were under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, harps and lyres, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the direction of the king.” (1 Chronicles 25:5-6, NASB)

“Moreover, he made the laver of bronze with its base of bronze, from the mirrors of the serving women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting.” (Exodus 38:8, NASB)

Women consecrated jewels for the Tabernacle and were required to attend the reading of the Law. Exodus 35:22; Deut. 31:12.

“Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came and brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so did every man who presented an offering of gold to the LORD.” (Exodus 35:22, NASB)

““Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 31:12, NASB)

Women were required to purify themselves with certain ceremonies after their monthly cycles and after childbirth. Lev. 15:19-33; Lev. 12.

“When a woman has a discharge, if her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean.” (Leviticus 15:19-20, NASB)

“When she becomes clean from her discharge, she shall count off for herself seven days; and afterward she will be clean. Then on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young pigeons and bring them in to the priest, to the doorway of the tent of meeting. The priest shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement on her behalf before the LORD because of her impure discharge.” (Leviticus 15:28-30, NASB)

Women had many religious privileges among early Christians including prayer, hosting prayer meetings in their homes, performed services in households, prophesying, learning in assembly, individuality of dress, and appearance in good taste. Acts 1:14; Acts 12:12-13; 1 Cor. 11:5; 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11.

“These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” (Acts 1:14, NASB)

“And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer.” (Acts 12:12-13, NASB)

“But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.” (1 Corinthians 11:5, NASB)

“The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject



themselves, just as the Law also says.” (1 Corinthians 14:34, NASB)

“A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.” (1 Timothy 2:11, NASB)

Women had many domestic duties such as cooking in Genesis 18:6, spinning yarn in Exodus 35:25, embroidering in Proverbs 31:22, making garments in Acts 9:39, cleaning in Ruth 2:8, keeping vineyards in Song of Solomon 1:6, tending flocks and herds in Genesis 24:11, working in fields in Isaiah 27:11, and being doorkeepers in Matthew 26:69.

“So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it and make bread cakes.”” (Genesis 18:6, NASB)

“All the skilled women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun, in blue and purple and scarlet material and in fine linen.” (Exodus 35:25, NASB)

“She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.” (Proverbs 31:22, NASB)

“So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.” (Acts 9:39, NASB)

“Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.” (Ruth 2:8, NASB)

““Do not stare at me because I am swarthy, For the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me caretaker of the vineyards, But I have not taken care of my own vineyard.” (Song of Solomon 1:6, NASB)

“He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.” (Genesis 24:11, NASB)

“When its limbs are dry, they are broken off; Women come and make a fire with them, For they are not a people of discernment, Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them. And their Creator will not be gracious to them.” (Isaiah 27:11, NASB)

“Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.”” (Matthew 26:69, NASB)

Women had certain rules for their dress. Women were forbidden to wear clothes that were made for men. Women wore hair long. 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 Cor. 11:5-15.

“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.” (1 Timothy 2:9-10, NASB)

“Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.” (1 Peter 3:3-4, NASB)

Women are presented as having many different and varied characteristics such as being weaker than men in 1 Peter 3:7, timid in Isaiah 19:16, affectionate in 2 Samuel 1:26, tending to her offspring in Isaiah 49:15, being courteous to strangers in Genesis 24:17, needing consent of parents for marriage in Genesis 24:3-4, remaining unmarried was considered a calamity in Judges 11:37, being shrewd in 2 Samuel 20:16-22.



"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." (1 Peter 3:7, NASB)

"In that day the Egyptians will become like women, and they will tremble and be in dread because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He is going to wave over them." (Isaiah 19:16, NASB)

"I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful Than the love of women." (2 Samuel 1:26, NASB)

"Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you." (Isaiah 49:15, NASB)

"Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jar.'" (Genesis 24:17, NASB)

"and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.'" (Genesis 24:3-4, NASB)

"She said to her father, 'Let this thing be done for me; let me alone two months, that I may go to the mountains and weep because of my virginity, I and my companions.'" (Judges 11:37, NASB)

"Then a wise woman called from the city, 'Hear, hear! Please tell Joab, 'Come here that I may speak with you.'" (2 Samuel 20:16, NASB)

"Such is not the case. But a man from the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has lifted up his hand against King David. Only hand him over, and I will depart from the city." And the woman said to Joab, "Behold, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." Then the woman wisely came to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each to his tent. Joab also returned to the king at Jerusalem." (2 Samuel 20:21-22, NASB)

Women at times became the object of abuse. Deut. 22:23-27.

"If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. But if in the field the man finds the girl who is engaged, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lies with her shall die. But you shall do nothing to the girl; there is no sin in the girl worthy of death, for just as a man rises against his neighbor and murders him, so is this case. When he found her in the field, the engaged girl cried out, but there was no one to save her." (Deuteronomy 22:23-27, NASB)

Women were sold to pay their husbands debts. Matt. 18:25.

"But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made." (Matthew 18:25, NASB)

Women have been the first at things. First to sin in Genesis 3:6. First at the sepulcher in Mark 15:40-41. First to whom the Lord appeared at His resurrection in John 20:14-18.

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband



with her, and he ate.” (Genesis 3:6, NASB)

“There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.” (Mark 15:40-41, NASB)

“When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and that He had said these things to her.” (John 20:14-18, NASB)