



part 1 of 2—

Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophecy

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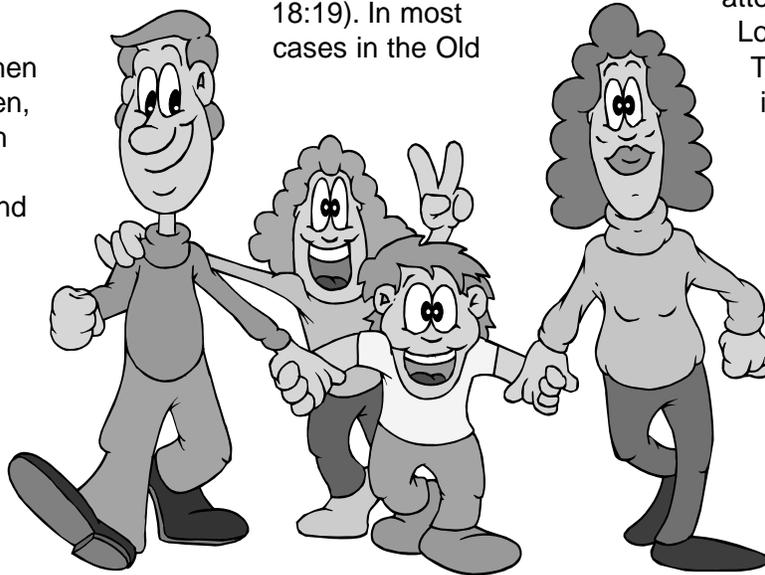
Did God have children in mind when He inspired the prophet Joel to write, “Your sons and daughters will prophesy” (Joel 2:28)? Looking at the context, we see the passage begins with the promise, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Hebrew *kol basar*— “all flesh”).

First, God identifies sons and daughters, then old men and young men, then His servants, both men and women (Hebrew, *ha`avadim* and *hashshephachoth*: “the male slaves and the female slaves”).

Clearly, the intent is to show that the promise of the Spirit and the impartation of prophetic gifts is for all people without regard to race, sex, age, social status, or national origin. These manifestations of prophetic gifts were important from early times, for they were and are evidences of the presence of God in the midst of His people. (See 1 Corinthians 14:24,25, where prophesying will cause visitors to exclaim, “God is really among you!”)

Biblical Examples

The word “prophet” (Hebrew, *navi*) comes from an old word meaning “a speaker,” but it came to mean “a person who spoke for God, or for gods,” since there were pagans who claimed to be prophets, such as prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:19). In most cases in the Old



Testament, those who prophesied (spoke for God) were mature men and women. But God also used children. Samuel is an example.

The Boy Samuel

God used Samuel to speak His word to Eli when Samuel was still a child. It is true that the

Hebrew term by which he is called, *hanna`ar* (1 Samuel 3:1), can mean a boy or a young man. However, the Bible says, “The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord” (1 Samuel 3:19,20).

This indicates that he was indeed a young boy when he began to prophesy and that he continued to speak for God “as he grew up.” That he “did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him” (1 Samuel 3:7) also shows that he was still a child who had not yet come to know the Lord in a personal way when God first spoke to him.

The Boy Zephaniah

Another who began to prophesy when he was quite young is Zephaniah. His genealogy in verse 1 of his book shows he was descended from King Hezekiah and that he prophesied in the days of King Josiah. Josiah was eight years old when

he became king and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. But Zephaniah's genealogy shows there was one more generation between him and Hezekiah than between Josiah and Hezekiah. Because of this it seems probable that Zephaniah was a child or not more than a teenager when he began to prophesy.

For the Children

On the Day of Pentecost, when the 120 received the promise and

spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4), Peter said, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Then he proceeded to manifest the gift of prophecy, glorifying Jesus Christ, calling those who were gathered to repentance, and warning and pleading with them by the gift of exhortation. He followed his call to repentance with the promise that after they repented and were baptized in water, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He emphasized, "The promise is

for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).

The promise of the baptism in the Holy Spirit would continue to be available to them, to their children, and to the Gentiles. (See Ephesians 2:17, where those who are far away are the Gentiles.) More than that, the promise would continue to be available to all whom the Lord would call to be saved.

Questions for Further Study—

1. The promise of the Holy Spirit was given for whom?
2. What verses indicate that Samuel and Zephaniah were young when they first began to prophesy?
3. How do we know the gift of the Holy Spirit is available to people today?
4. How do we know the gift of the Holy Spirit is available to **children** today?

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Does the mention of *children* in Acts 2:39 mean *young* children? That, as we learned in the previous article, was not the point Peter was making. He wanted them to see that the promise was for the next generation—and the next and the next without limit. However, if we go back to the story of Samuel, the fact that he did not yet know the Lord in a personal way tells us that God was bringing him into that personal knowledge so he could give God's message and speak for God. If children are to be used by the Holy Spirit, they must be old enough to come into the personal knowledge of Jesus as Lord and Savior, so they can open their hearts and minds to God the Holy Spirit.

was older, she found the same woman who remembered and confirmed that to her. Other children were baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. My sister was baptized in the Spirit when she was eight years old and had a marvelous experience.



The Gift Is for Children

In the Azusa Street revival in 1906 in Los Angeles, California, my mother was eleven years old when she was baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. People were coming from all over the world to that meeting. An African-American woman from one of the French-speaking islands told her she was speaking in French. When my mother

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter took speaking in tongues as the equivalent of the prophesying promised in Joel. Today many children are receiving the Holy Spirit in our Sunday Schools, churches, children's revivals, and children's camps. If they are old enough to understand what it means to come to the Lord and be saved, they are certainly old enough to seek and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Prophecy Is for Encouragement

In what other ways can children prophesy (other than speaking in tongues)? We must remember that prophecy in the Bible is speaking *for God to* people "for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3).

It is not primarily a matter of prophesying the future. It is *forthtelling*, rather than *foretelling*. A good example is found in Acts 15:32 where "Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers."

We should encourage children and young people to be open to the Holy Spirit, not only to be baptized in the Spirit, but to be used by Him. He can use them to encourage and strengthen one another spiritually, as well as to give comfort and encouragement in the midst of the difficulties and temptations of the world around them.

Prophecy Is for Witnessing

Remember, too, the Spirit comes to make us Christ's witnesses (Acts 1:8). Children and young people are most open to

