

Women in Church Leadership

by Mako A. Nagasawa

A Male-Dominated Field?

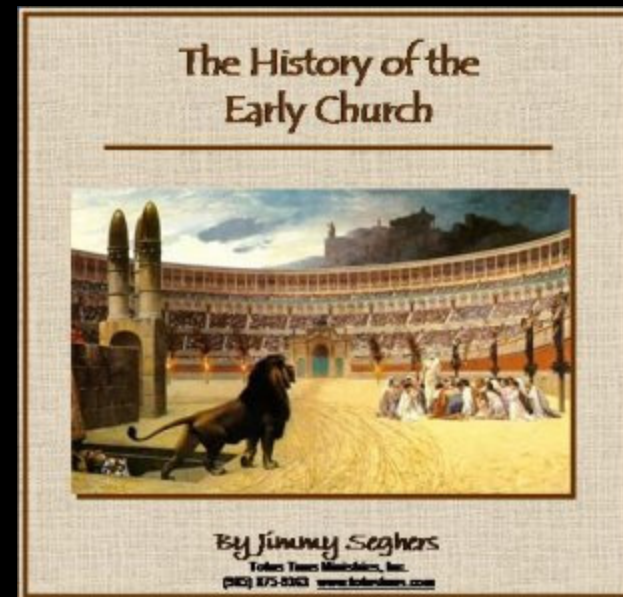


Critical Appreciation



Two Vital Criteria

- Scripture
- Early Church History



Arguments Against Women in Church Leadership

- Israel's priests and kings were men
- Jesus was a man
- Jesus' twelve apostles were men
- Paul's elders were men

Some of My Sources

- Dr. Gordon Hugenberger
- Dr. Thomas F. Torrance
- Dr. Karl Barth

Arguments Against Women in Church Leadership

- Israel's priests and kings were men
- Jesus was a man
- Jesus' twelve apostles were men
- Paul's elders were men

Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Prior to priests and kings, Israel had
 - Elders
 - Judges
 - Prophets



Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Ex.1:15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations. ¹⁶ Go and gather the **elders** of Israel together...^{Ex.4:29} Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the **elders** of the sons of Israel...



Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Ex.18:13 It came about the next day that Moses **sat to judge** the people... ¹⁴ ...Moses' father-in-law...said, 'What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone **sit as judge** and all the people stand about you from morning until evening? ... ²¹ select out of all the people **able men who fear God, men of truth**, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.



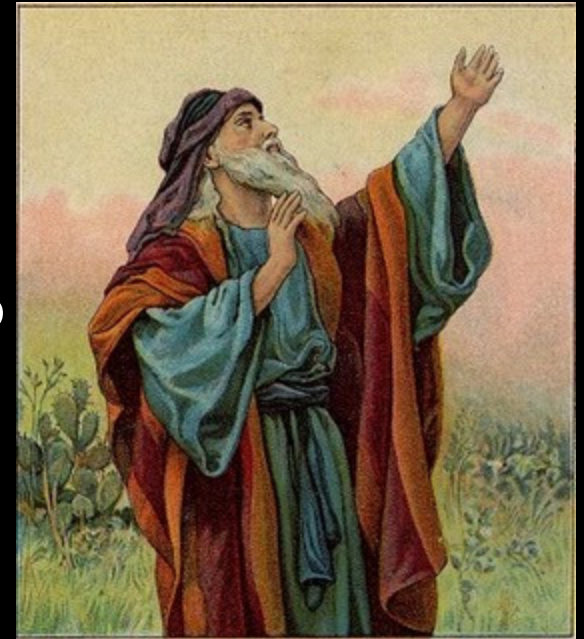
Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Ex.18:22 Let them **judge** the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will **judge...** ²⁵ Moses chose able **men** out of all Israel... ²⁶ They **judged** the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would **judge...**
- Dt.16:18 You shall appoint for yourself **judges and officers in all your towns** which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall **judge** the people with righteous judgment.



Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Dt.13:1 If a **prophet**... arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ² ...saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams... ⁵ But that **prophet** or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because **he** has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt...



Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- All these roles seem to be for men
- But Hebrew is a gendered language, like Spanish
 - In Spanish, 'el' and 'ella' are pronouns for 'him' and 'her.'
 - But 'el' can also mean 'person' generally, without restricting the meaning to men. This is the 'inclusive male tense.'
 - How do you tell whether 'el' refers to 'him' as specifically male or 'that person' generally? Context.
- In this case, what does the rest of Scripture say?

Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Jdg.4:4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was **judging** Israel at that time. ⁵ ...the sons of Israel came up to her for **judgment**. ⁶ Now she...summoned Barak...and said to him, ‘Behold, the LORD...has commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men... ⁷ I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army...and I will give him into your hand.’



Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Ex.15:20 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.



- Jdg.4:4 Now Deborah, a **prophetess**, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Deborah is portrayed as a 'prophet like Moses': warrior, judge, prophet, worship leader
- See my notes on *The Portrayal of Deborah as Leader and the Theme of Women in Judges*:
<http://nagasawafamily.org/judges-theme-women.pdf>



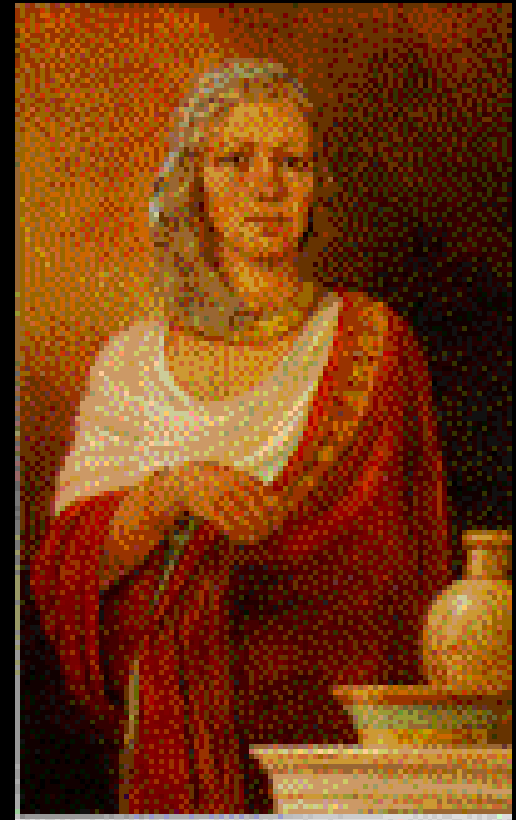
Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Isa.8:3 So I approached the **prophetess**, and she conceived and gave birth to a son.
- 2 Ki.24:14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the **prophetess**, the wife of Shallum... and they spoke to her. ¹⁵ She said to them, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel...'
- Neh.6:14 Noadiah the **prophetess** and the rest of the prophets



Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- Huldah (2 Kings 22:14 – 20):
 - A prophetess who said ‘Thus says the LORD God’ (22:15, 18)
 - Sought by King Josiah, the best king of Judah for a long time, and his leading male advisors
 - Authoritatively interpreted the book of the Torah that they had rediscovered in the Temple
 - Was believed by King Josiah
 - Led to covenant renewal and spiritual revival in Judah (23:1 – 25)



Israel's Elders, Judges, Prophets

- The Old Testament writers viewed Israel's roles of elder, judge, and prophet as open to women, not just to men. (Gordon Hugenberger, "Women in church office: hermeneutics or exegesis? A survey of 1 Timothy 2:8-15." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (Summer 1992), pp. 341-360.)
- See also the divorce legislation of Deuteronomy 24:1 – 4. Phrased for husbands, but applied to wives. Jesus thought so in Mark 10:12.

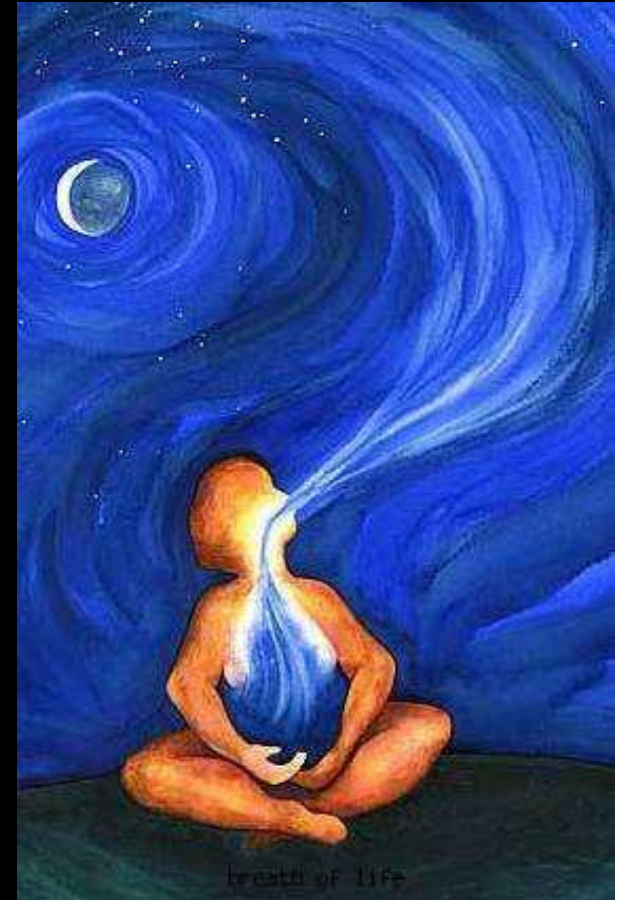
The Foundation for Female Leaders: Marriage over Family of Origin

- Sociologically, for women to have leadership roles in society, the power of the extended family must be limited and checked
- Gen.2:24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.
 - Each married couple enters society equal with all the other households
 - But in traditional cultures, the wife becomes the lowest ranking member of her husband's family and has little to no standing – that is true patriarchy
 - Who wrote Genesis 2? Humans alone?



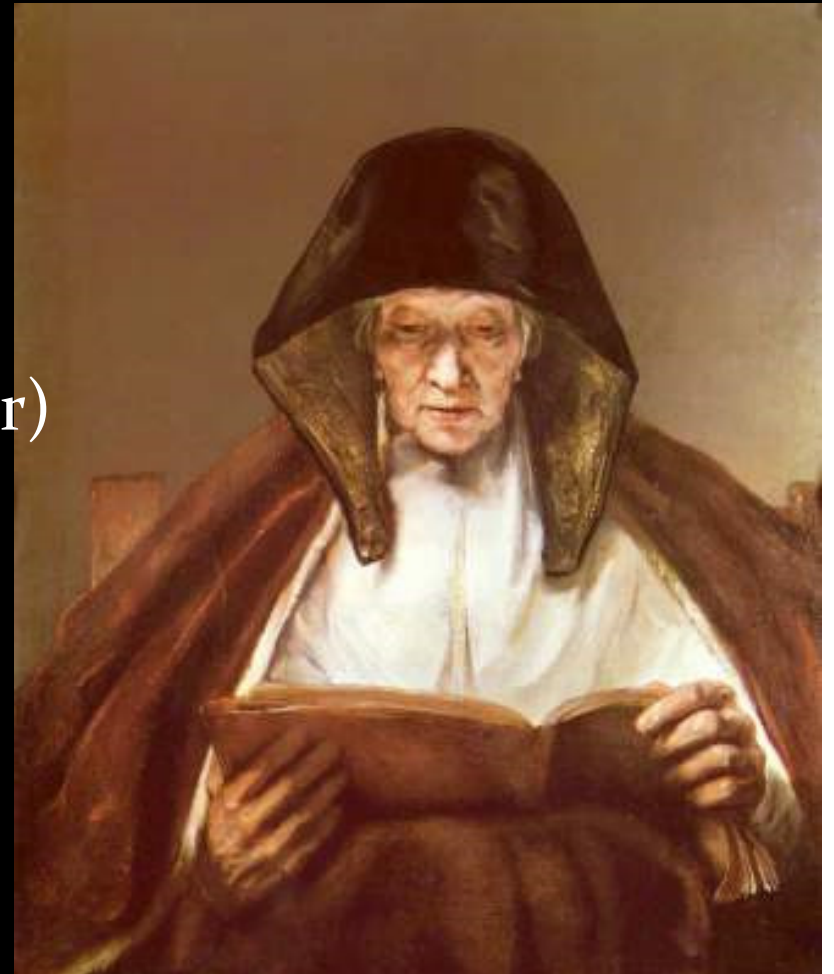
Women Speaking in Israel: As Mothers in the Family

- Pr.1:8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake **your mother's teaching**
 - **God's wisdom is from creation:** Pr.8:22 The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. ²³ From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth... ³² Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways.
 - **Both men and women were to repeat God's commission and speak God's wisdom:** Gen.1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them



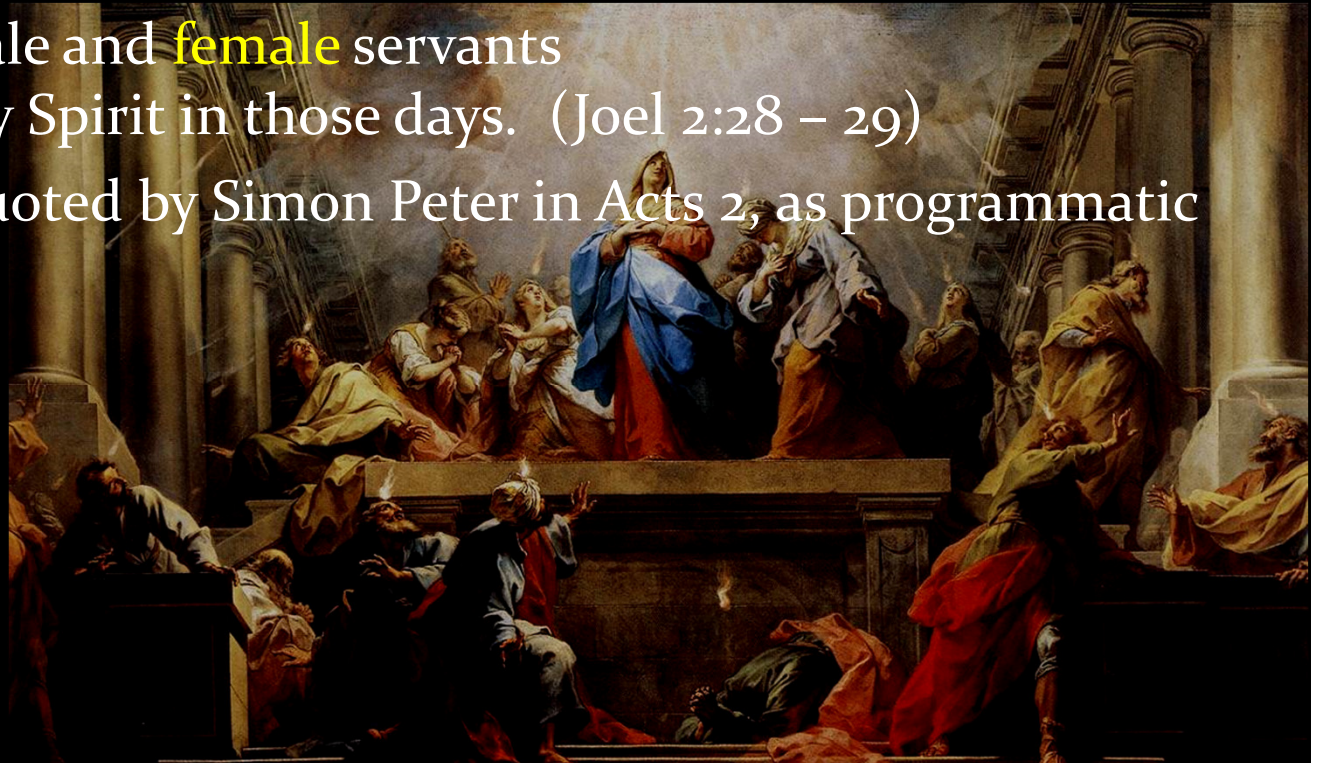
Women Speaking in Israel: As Human Authors of Scripture

- Miriam (Ex.15:20)
- Deborah (Jdg.4 – 5)
- Hannah (1 Sam.2)
- Probably Ruth (book of Ruth)
- King Lemuel's mother (Pr.31)
- Probably Esther (book of Esther)
- Mary (Luke 1)



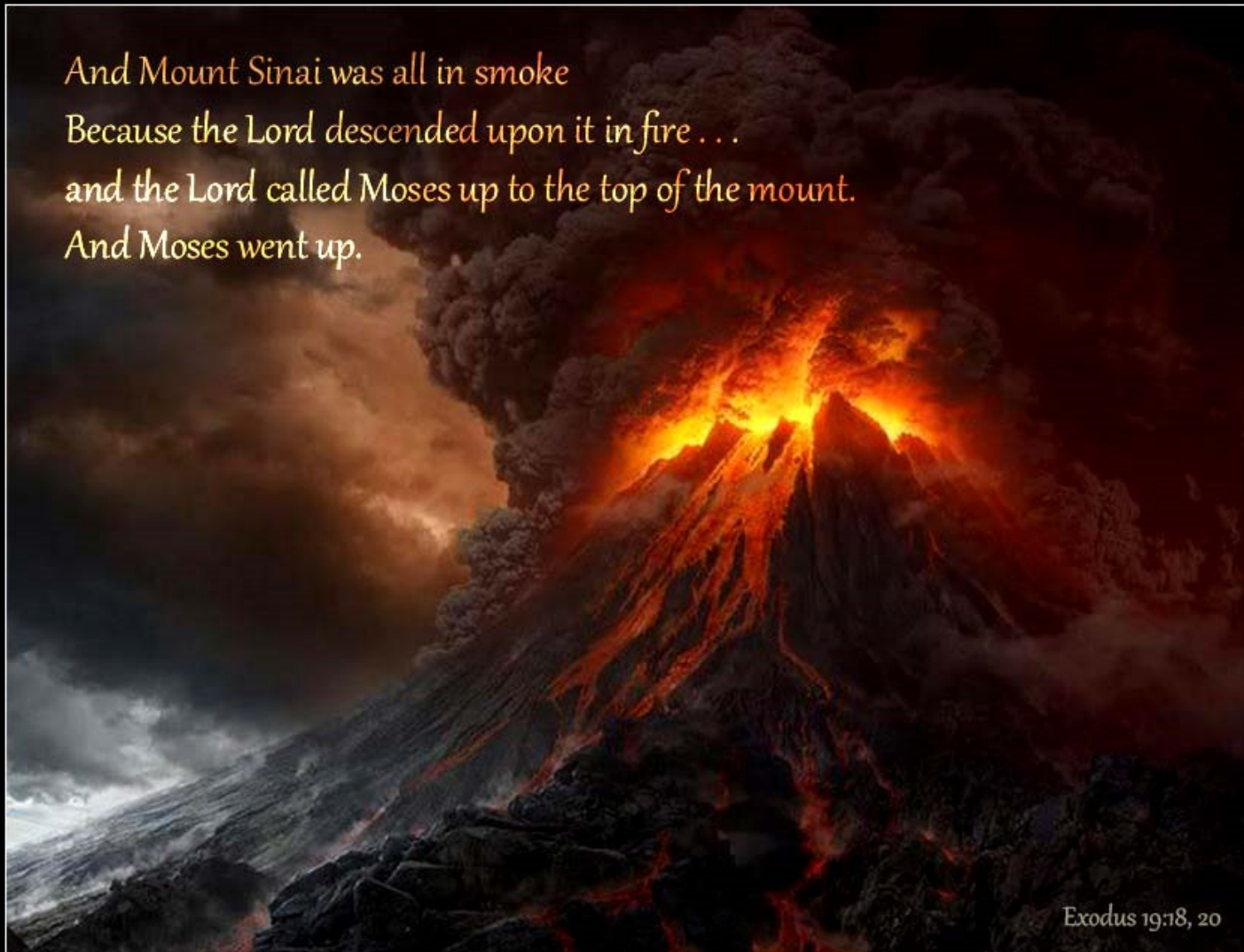
Women Speaking in Israel: In the Restoration of True Humanness

- 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.
29 Even on the male and **female** servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28 – 29)
- This passage is quoted by Simon Peter in Acts 2, as programmatic for the church.



Priests Were Plan B

*And Mount Sinai was all in smoke
Because the Lord descended upon it in fire . . .
and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount.
And Moses went up.*



Exodus 19:18, 20

Priests Were Plan B

- **Priests** mediate the distance between God and people through sacrifices
- Ex.19:5 Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me **a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**'... ¹³ When **the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain**'... ¹⁶ So it came about on the third day...that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and **a very loud trumpet sound**...¹⁷ ...and they stood **at the foot of the mountain**.

Priests Were Plan B

- Ex.19:19 When **the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder**, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. ²⁰ The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ^{Ex.20:18} ...they trembled and **stood at a distance**... ²¹ So the people **stood at a distance** ...
- Israel's failure to come up the mountain and meet with God face to face leads to their distance from God, God coming veiled (in the Tabernacle) rather than relating face to face, and priests who mediate that distance through sacrifices. (John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*)

Kings Were Plan B

- ^{1 Sam.8:7} The LORD said to Samuel, ‘Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but **they have rejected Me from being king over them.** ⁸ Like all the deeds which they have done...they have forsaken Me and served other gods – so they are doing to you also. ⁹ ...you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them.’



So What About Priests and Kings?

- Priests and kings were two levels of leadership added on because of Israel's disobedience; God did not want them originally.



So What About Priests and Kings?

- Jesus fulfilled the role of **priest**
 - By bearing the burden of sin and carrying it to God to consume (Hebrews; Romans 3:21 – 26; Galatians 3 – 4)
- Jesus fulfilled the role of **king**
 - By being the true heir of King David (Four Gospels, Acts, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians)



So What About Priests and Kings?

- Jesus appears to have returned God's people to that part of Israel's original story where their leadership involved elders, judges, and prophets. Women occupied these roles.
 - Catholic and Orthodox Christians later reinstated male 'priests' who offer the 'sacrifice' of communion.
 - Protestants (excepting Anglicans) reject the reinstatement of a priesthood.

Arguments Against Women in Church Leadership

- ~~Israel's priests and kings were men~~
- Jesus was a man
- Jesus' twelve apostles were men
- Paul's elders were men