

Renewal Ministries of Colorado Springs

Hope and Healing Through Christ Centered Ministry

THE OFFICE OF THE PROPHET

Old and New Testament Ministry

For many years, there has been misunderstanding, misapplication and some degree of abuse regarding the office of the prophet and in particular the gift of prophecy. In the body of Christ at large we have seen every extreme. Some would say that the ministry office of the prophet is past as is the need for the gift of prophecy. Others represent themselves as holding the office and yet are not accountable to local church authority or open to personal scrutiny regarding their lives, their ministry or the accuracy of their prophetic declarations.

The purpose of this two-part message is to give you a deeper understanding of the present day ministry of the prophet along with some biblical/practical guidelines regarding "personal prophecy."

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET

Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definition: Prophet: spokesman, speaker, prophet

The Old Testament prophets were holy men of God. They were sent from the presence of God as His representatives to declare His word, His mind and His will for a specific time, situation, generation, group or nation.

The man of God: They were morally and ethically men of God, following, declaring and upholding the ways of God (1Sam. 9:6; 1 Kings 12:22)

Seers: These were men who had visions, insight & fore sight from the Lord for the people (1 Sam. 9:6; 2 Chr. 33:18, 35:18; 2 Sam. 24:11; Amos 7:12; Isa. 29:10)

Servant of the lord: They were called the *Servants of Jehovah* (Haggai 12:10)

Messenger of the lord: Sent by God, faithfully bearing the message of the Lord to the nations (Isa. 43:19; Mal. 3:1)

Prophets: This was the most common designation. They were men of God who received the Word of the Lord in various ways. They spoke not from human origin but as they were moved by the Spirit of God.

Hosea 12:10 I spoke to the prophets, gave them many visions and told parables through them."

Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

2 Peter 1:21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The prophet was a powerful preacher (prophetic forth-telling) exhorting, reproofing, warning, confirming, edifying and bringing comfort. He was also a prophetic Fore-teller, predicting future events many times in an effort to promote immediate repentance and holiness. They also communicated the messages of God through the written word and in many instances with symbolic acts. Their ministry was often accompanied with miraculous signs and wonders

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT PROPHET

While it is clear that all believers on occasion can potentially prophesy not all will be Prophets.

1 Corinthians 14:5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.

The ministry gift of a prophet is not the result of human desire. The prophet must have a clear calling on his life from the Lord. He must know that it is Christ himself, by divine appointment, that has set him in the Church for this specific ministry

Eph. 4:11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

1 Corinthians 12:28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. (comp. Acts 13:1)

The prophet is one who speaks for God, bringing, revelation, inspiration and direction from God to the Church. The Holy Spirit enables the prophet to reveal present unknown facts, foretell future events or express the mind of God with *words of knowledge*, *words of wisdom* or *prophecy* by the Holy Spirit. Like the Old Testament prophets, he may also be used in the gifts of healing and miracles.

Because of the broad nature and equipping importance of the prophet he should have the same qualifications of an elder (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:6-9). Ministry without proven moral character, commitment to the authority of scripture and reliance upon the grace of God leaves us open to deception and vulnerable to the enemy.

Thayers' Greek Definition:

- 1) in Greek writings, an interpreter of oracles or of other hidden things
- 2) one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, especially concerning future events, and in particular such as relate to the cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation

- 2a) the OT prophets, having foretold the kingdom, deeds and death, of Jesus the Messiah.
- 2b) of John the Baptist, the herald of Jesus the Messiah
- 2c) of the illustrious prophet, the Jews expected before the advent of the Messiah
- 2d) the Messiah
- 2e) of men filled with the Spirit of God, who by God's authority and command in words of weight pleads the cause of God and urges salvation of men
- 2f) of prophets that appeared in the apostolic age among Christians
 - 2f1) they are associated with the apostles
 - 2f2) they discerned and did what is best for the Christian cause, foretelling certain future events. (Acts 11:27)
 - 2f3) in the religious assemblies of the Christians, they were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak, having power to instruct, comfort, encourage, rebuke, convict, and stimulate, their hearers

III. THE MINISTRY/ FUNCTION OF THE PROPHET

Foundational and governmental: Ephesians 2:19-20 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Preparing and building up: Ephesians 4:11-13 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare (Greek, complete furnishing) God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (emphasis added)

Strength, encouragement and comfort: 1 Cor. 14:3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

Acts 15:32 (Amplified) Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets (inspired interpreters of the will and purposes of God), urged and warned and consoled and encouraged the brethren with many words and strengthened them.

Conviction of sin: 1 Cor. 14:24-25 But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, ²⁵and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

Warning of future events: Acts 11:27-28 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)

Acts 21:10-11 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' "

JUDGING PROPHETIC WORDS AND OUR RESPONSE TO PERSONAL PROPHECY

Part 2

Prophecy is to speak forth by divine inspiration the mind, will and purpose of God for a specific time and or a particular situation. Prophecy can be general, specific, conditional and unconditional.

IV. REASONS TO JUDGE PROPHECY

Those who prophesy are not *inerrant*. Sometimes the person speaking can be motivated by a wrong attitude or spirit. If they are angry, have suffered loss, are under conviction or emotional stress it can taint their message. There may be times when prophecy is impure, weak or sloppy thus the reason for testing.

"An impure prophecy would be one with mixed content, some of which is good, some bad. It could be prophecy that does not have substance to its argument or follow through to a logical conclusion. Weak prophecy is like water that goes nowhere and really accomplishes nothing. Sloppy prophecy is characterized by crude language; crude thought patterns, and usually comes from a bold but undisciplined person." --The Prophetic Ministry, Ernest Gentile

1 Cor. 14:29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 Thes. 5:20-21 do not treat prophecies with contempt. ²¹Test everything. Hold on to the good.

V. WAYS TO JUDGE PROPHECY

The scripture: The written word of God is the ultimate test in judging all prophetic utterances.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (Matt. 5:18, 24:35; Luke 21:33; 1 Peter 1:25; 2:Peter 1:21)

Edification: Prophecy should encourage, build up and strengthen us spiritually and lead to peace.

1 Cor. 14:3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

1 Cor. 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,

The witness of the Holy Spirit: The Spirit of God in you should bear witness to the prophetic words spoken by the same Spirit. If there is confusion or a lack of peace “put it on the shelf.” Continue to pray about the word and seek the counsel of others concerning its content.

1 Corinthians 2:11-14 (NLT) No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit. ¹²And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world’s spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. ¹³When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit’s words to explain spiritual truths. ¹⁴But people who aren’t Christians can’t understand these truths from God’s Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means.

Philip. 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The witness of others: if the word is to be established, others should confirm it. This could be other ministers, elders or parents, etcetera. Confirmation could also come from circumstances or other events in your life.

2 Cor. 13:1 This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." (comp. Deut. 19:15, Matthew 18:16, 1 Tim. 5:19, Hebrews 10:28)

Exaltation of Jesus Christ: True prophecy will always exalt the Lord and bring glory to Him alone. The focus is on Christ and NOT the one speaking.

John 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

John 16:14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

1 John 4:2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves.

Fulfillment of the Word: If the prophecy is predictive and does not come to pass it is not from the Lord.

Duet 18:20-27 ²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or ywho speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' ²¹ And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' ²² when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it bpresumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

Here are a few examples of false prophecies.

- Branch Davidians: Founder Vernon Houteff prophesied that David's Kingdom would be established on April 22, 1959.
- Church Universal and Triumphant: Elizabeth Clare Prophet prophesied that nuclear war would occur in 1990.
- Jehovah's Witnesses: The Watchtower Society predicted that Armageddon would occur in 1914. They now teach that Jesus Christ returned invisibly in 1914. They also predicted that Abraham and others would be resurrected in 1925, and that Armageddon would occur in 1941 and 1975 (they deny the 1975 prediction). They also predicted that Armageddon would occur with the "generation of 1914." They now say that "generation" is a figurative term for anyone who can understand the significance of 1914.
- Edgar E. Whisenant: Predicted that the rapture would occur on October 3, 1988. Explaining that his math had been incorrect, he later prophesied that the rapture would occur on either September 1 or 30, 1989.

Submission to authority: It is the leadership of the local church that ultimately has the responsibility to judge prophetic messages. The Senior Minister and elders are responsible for the care and protection of the congregation.

Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

1 Cor. 14:37-38 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. ³⁸If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

Personal accountability: The credibility of a prophet is based on accuracy and accountability. Does he take personal responsibility for the message if it is in error? There are two main aspects regarding the credibility of the prophet. *First*, is the inaccuracy excused away with such statements as, there was not enough prayer; there was a lack of faith or blaming others. The *second* is there a lack of repentance, rationalization or cover up when the predictions do not come to pass.

Personal lifestyle: While God can cause an impure vessel to bring forth a pure word, i.e. Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:22-35) the person speaking should be earnestly seeking to live a pure and Godly life. The gifts of the Spirit should be evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit. Living an ungodly lifestyle brings the word into question.

Matthew 7:20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

1 Cor. 13:1-2 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

2 Peter 2:2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

VI. RESPONDING TO PERSONAL PROPHECY

What do you do when someone comes up to you and says, "I have a *word* for you" or "Thus saith the Lord?"

First: As previously stated, test the prophetic word given. Does the message agree contextually with scripture? Does the message have substance and value? Does the message promote repentance, spiritual growth, bring encouragement and or comfort? Does this message seem manipulative or controlling? Does the message promote the speakers ideas and agenda or does the message promote Christ and His purposes? Is there a peaceful witness in your spirit and do other spiritually mature believers bear witness with what has been said. Is the speaker in submission to local church authority and willing to have the message judged by others? Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in the speaker's life?

Second: get counsel on any questions that you have concerning the message. Never allow a single prophesy or prophet to guide your life. Always remember that you need two or three witnesses NOT two or three prophesies, for confirmation.

Proverbs 11:14 (KJV) Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

2 Cor. 13:1 This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." (comp. Deut. 19:15, Matthew 18:16, 1 Tim. 5:19, Hebrews 10:28)

Third: recognize that there are two aspects to personal prophesy, God's responsibility, those things, which He said He would do, and your responsibility. Diligently focus on what you are responsible to do.

Agabus prophesies famine: Acts 11:27-30 ²⁷Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up and *began* to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the *reign*

of Claudius.²⁹ And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send *a contribution* for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.³⁰ And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

Prophecy concerning Barnabas and Saul: Acts 13:1-4 ¹Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Personal prophecy does not take the place of personal discipline in the areas of prayer, reading, fasting, giving and commitment to a local congregation. “*Prophecy is merely one witness of God’s direction for you. Remember that destiny is formed for you more by the development of your character than by the prophecy you receive.*” --Responding to Personal prophecy, Frank Damazio

Fourth: respond in faith. Do not be pessimistic saying, nothing will change, it’s too late. Etc. Take responsibility for what you can do.

Hebrews 4:2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.