

Prophets and the New Testament Church

Jesus Christ is the greatest prophet to have ever lived. He was the God of our forefathers and it was He that guided and inspired the prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus didn't come to do His own thing. He came to do the works and miracles assigned to Him by the Father. (See Hebrews 10:7-9 and John 6:38.)

Jesus came to the earth to deliver a very important message from the Father. That message was to announce the Kingdom of God and to prepare us to be a part of that Government.

The Gospel given to us by Jesus has coded messages for His true disciples. The Gospel is replete with prophecy after prophecy, yet few have discovered them. In Hebrews 1:1-2 we see that Jesus is the prophet through whom God is speaking to the Church today, "God, ...has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*" (NKJV). And it is this Jesus, in Spirit, that moves His servants to prophesy today.

Many of the parables of the Gospels are actually prophecies for the Church. They foretell of the events to happen within the Church leading up to Christ's return and God's government established on this earth.

Prophets have Never Been Respected

Down through the ages, most prophets sent by God have been treated with horrible disrespect. See the short history of the sufferings of God's servants in Hebrews 11. Even Jesus, the greatest prophet of them all, was ridiculed, horribly tortured, and eventually murdered.

Prophets have always faced attitudes like, "I know of God too, what makes you think He only speaks through you?" They are, therefore, far too often despised and rejected. **Prophets do not choose their calling. God gives the message and they are compelled to respond!**

We see in Matthew 13:54-58 (NKJV) that, "When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, 'Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?' So they were offended at Him.

"But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.' Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Jesus was considered, by those of His own hometown, to be far too common and ordinary to be used by God.

Are There Prophets in the Church Today?

So exactly what is a prophet? **A prophet is one who is moved by the Spirit of God, therefore, a spokesman for God. A prophet solemnly declares to men what he**

has received by inspiration, especially concerning future events, and in particular such as relate to the Kingdom of God and salvation of mankind. (From Thayer's Greek Definitions.)

If Jesus is a prophet, is there need for prophets in the Church today? Let's examine the foundation on which the Church was to be built.

In Ephesians 2:19-22 (NKJV) we see, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

So immediately we notice that prophets were part of the original foundation for the Church. Now most assume that this is referring to the prophets of the Old Testament. This is true, but they are only part of the prophets that formed the backbone of the Church today. When we observe the positions of service God gave to the New Testament Church, we may be quite surprised to see that prophets are also mentioned.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:27-30, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" Each of these positions of service are placed within the Church—the body of Christ, to help the Church grow. Another example is found in Acts 11:27, "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch." So prophets were part of the early New Testament Church.

We see also another place where, "... Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*" (Acts 15:32).

Now in Acts 13:1 it says, "...there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."

Some may say, "These examples happened a long time ago." But are there any prophets within the Church today?

Today, few if any, churches are ordaining "prophets" as an area of responsibility within their congregations. Many misunderstand the term "prophet" and the purpose for them within the Church.

To prophesy simply means to speak or write through God's inspiration.

Are Prophets Respected Within the Church Today?

It seems the higher the office, the less respect is given to true servants of Christ. The Apostle Paul recognized and understood this point very well. He said, "...I sometimes think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's

parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike” (I Cor. 4:9 NLT). And so it is with prophets also. Few want to be called an “apostle” or “prophet” within the Church because of the ridicule and disrespect the office brings. There is a type of reverse psychology going around in churches. Why don’t we accept good as being good instead of being bad? It is thought to be vain to be called an Apostle—one sent by God to accomplish His will. But if we call ourselves “Missionaries” that is all right; it doesn’t sound so pompous. The same is true with being a prophet. No one wants to be called a prophet. Many pastors or ministers will even go so far as to say, “I’m no prophet.” But, in fact, we should always desire to speak and write through God’s inspiration.

Even if a member were known to receive information or instructions from God, through the Holy Spirit, that person is often ignored within the congregation. It is a sad state of affairs today because the Spirit of God is often quenched inside churches.

The Apostle Paul said in I Thess. 5:19-21, “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” We are not to put down the Holy Spirit when it is revealing truth through a prophet. Remember, the Holy Spirit and the Word—the Bible will always agree. This is how we are able to prove the veracity of the words a prophet may speak or write.

Remember the statement from Isaiah 8:20 (NKJV), “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.”

Jesus said, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev. 3:13). It is truly sad to see so few churches that are actually listening to what the Spirit is saying to them.

In Acts 2:17-18 (NLT) Peter states, “‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out My Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. **In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on My servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy.**’” We are a lot closer to “the last days” than the Apostle Peter was. Yet today, this prophesying is far too often routinely being ignored and squelched within churches.

What is our attitude and approach toward all this activity generated by God’s Holy Spirit? If we despise those who prophesy, we will miss vital information God wants to give to the Church at the end of this age!

Remember the words of the Apostle Paul, “**Do not smother the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at those who prophesy**” (I Thess. 5:19-20 TLB).