

# PROPHETS AND THE PROPHETIC

## ***Prophetic Transition—Old Covenant to New***

Under the old Covenant the prophets represented God in the earth. They spoke His Word and did His Work. At any given time there were only a few that walked with God in this manner. If you needed something from God, you had to find the prophet of God.

The way God speaks to us changed dramatically under the New Covenant.

Hebrews 1:1-2 NASB

- (1) God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,
- (2) in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Now, God has spoken to us through the Son. He has become our source of supply of all that we need from God. Prophecy is even defined as it relates to Jesus.

Revelation 19:10 NASB

- (10) Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he \*said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Under the new covenant prophecy can be divided into three categories all of which relate to Jesus:

- What Jesus *has done*;
- What Jesus *is doing*, and
- What Jesus *will do*.

We have a process of how the Holy Spirit administrates the things of the Lord revealed in John 16: 13-15:

**PROCESS:** The Holy Spirit takes what belongs to Jesus and shows it to us. Whatever the Holy Spirit hears, that's what He speaks to us. The Holy Spirit is the administrator of what belongs to God and of what God says.

The Holy Spirit is the only channel of access to the council of the Godhead—he hears and brings it back to us.

1 Corinthians 2:9-13 NASB

- (9) but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."
- (10) For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.
- (11) For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.
- (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from

- God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,  
(13) which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

## ***The Timeline of God***

A “prophetic people” have to be able to express the heart and intention of God to the world in order to be classified “prophetic”. Which means that we first must understand His heart and intention or we won’t be able to express Him properly to others.

We also need to understand that God has a timeline for completing His purpose and that the times and seasons are expressions of the Father’s will. An example of this is the promise to Abraham about his descendants when the Lord “cut covenant” with him.

Genesis 15:13-14 NASB

- (13) *God* said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.  
(14) "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

It was in God’s timeline that Abraham’s descendants would be in bondage for 400 years and then He would bring them out by sending Moses as a deliverer. We see from this that the stream of God’s purpose flows through history and as God raises up prophets or prophetic people, they must stand in the stream of His purpose just as others did before them.

As the Lord uses people to reveal or accomplish His purpose, each one He uses stands directly in the stream of those used previously by the Lord. This gives us a continuity of the fulfillment of the purpose of God. Any prophetic person should understand the stream of God and how their work fits with those who went before. Those who don’t understand this become “prophetic loose cannons” and hinder or even divert the purpose of God.

To understand our place in the stream of God, we must understand the purpose of the Father and the timeline of God. All work of the Lord, which has been assigned to us, is woven into the fabric of God’s eternal purpose.

## ***The Prophetic Walk***

Prophetic people are naturally supernatural. Their walk in the Spirit is a peaceful, natural expression of the Life of the Lord and as different situations are encountered, the power of the Spirit is shown in a most natural way. The Holy Spirit may be manifested in a simple manner or in a dramatic powerful display of the magnificence of the Lord.

The personality characteristics that are inherent in one called prophetically are challenging to others. Those called as prophets usually have a “hard core” personality—they are usually abrasive to others. They tend to speak in absolutes without any apparent mercy or compromise. As a consequence, there is a measure of conflict expressed in their relationships. Because of this, others begin to distance themselves from them, which results in the prophetically called becoming loners with feelings of alienation, being on the outside looking in, feeling like a “fifth” wheel when around other people. This cause the prophetically called to withdraw into themselves, which is a great mistake.

Deep within all of those who are prophetically called (at least all that I have known, including

myself) is a core identity problem that is expressed as insecurity and/or a need for approval. There is a danger in one becoming a false prophet when the need for the approval and acceptance of men override the acceptance and approval of the Lord. A prophetically gifted person must learn to be absolutely unshakable in who he is in the Lord. He must learn to separate people's response to any prophetic word that he might give from his own identity. We must allow people to reject a word without accepting it as a rejection of ourselves.

God did not design any of us to be loners, including prophetic people. While we may be alone for a season, we are not to isolate ourselves on a long term basis. The Holy Spirit works in us to cause us to desire to be with other believers in order to give and receive of the life of the Lord and the fellowship of the Spirit. However, many prophetic people do seem to live their lives as loners. This is because others, through not understanding the working and gifting of the Spirit, have hurt them deeply and they have withdrawn themselves from close fellowship.

We receive our prophetic gifting in seed form. Seeds have very little resemblance to the full grown plant. Anyone looking at a two-week-old fetus would never be able to describe what the full-grown person would look like. Likewise, we can't take a tadpole out of the water, place it on land and say to it, "you're a frog, so jump". There must be a growth process that causes the tadpole to grow legs and be able to breath air.

So it is with the prophetic—there must be a growth process, which takes time. There is no such thing as "instant spirituality", even for one who is gifted by the Holy Spirit and who has a call upon his life for ministry.

### ***Three Aspects of the Prophetic***

Learning to walk in the supernatural is a learned process. It takes time for us to grow properly in consistency and in veracity of the prophetic.

#### **1. The general or basic prophetic function**

The gifts of the Spirit are something that Paul told us that we should desire; but the prophetic aspect is so needed by the Church that Paul told the Corinthians to desire it more than the other gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:1 NASB

- (1) Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

The gifts of the Spirit are not our "play toys" nor are they medals of spirituality that we wear on our chests. This type of thinking is carnal. All manifestations of the Spirit are given to build up the Body, and we who exercise the gifts do so for the profit and well being of our fellow believers.

1 Corinthians 12:7 NASB

- (7) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

The Greek word for "common good" is *sumphero*; derived from Strong's # G4862 and G5342; and means *to bring together, to be profitable*. The gifts aren't given to us for personal use but we are to bring them together with others and contribute what the Lord has provided so that others may be edified for the common good.

The first aspect of the prophetic is available to everyone and should function without strain or effort in every gathering of believers.

1 Corinthians 14:31 NASB

**(31)** For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

Every Spirit-filled believer may prophesy. This is the beginning of prophetic training and for some will provide a foundation for further growth in the other areas of the prophetic or other gifts of the Spirit.

This level of the prophetic has strict limits for the types of prophecy given.

1 Corinthians 14:3 NASB

**(3)** But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

We are to edify, exhort and console the other believers. The root word used here for edification is an architectural word, which basically means to build up. Every one of us needs to be built up, strengthened, and established on a solid foundation. In the same way we need to be exhorted to do the will of God, to yield to His dealings, and to not compromise His call on our lives. And, on occasion, we all need to be consoled and comforted, to know that God loves us and has not forsaken us.

We are told that the operation of the Spirit in this way is not something that should be stopped, squelched, or despised.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 NASB

**(19)** Do not quench the Spirit;  
**(20)** do not despise prophetic utterances.

Prophecy can become so common that it makes no impact upon us. Even so, we must remember that it is the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the filter of people and not allow ourselves to take it for granted nor think too little of the words brought or the ones through whom they come.

## 2. Prophetic ministry

Besides the general use of the gifts, I see two characteristics of prophetic ministry:

- Intercession, and
- Worship

The intercessors generally are a part of the “watchman” functions of the Old Testament prophets (there are two types or categories). They are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to direct their prayers and bring revelation of the will of God for specific prayer warfare. (There is a third type, but I consider it a bridge between the prophetic ministry and the function of a Prophet, so it will be discussed later in the lesson.)

### The Lookouts

The first watchman category is the Lookout type. These watchmen were on the walls of the city so that they could see anyone approaching the gates of the city. They reported any sightings to the Elders, which sat at the gates. Normally, the watchman only reported (sometimes it was obvious that it was a war party, in which case, he blew the trumpet). Any action to be taken was not his decision. The Elders decided on the action; whether those approaching were friend or foe; whether to close the gates or leave them open, etc.

We need Lookout Intercessors who can see into the spiritual world; who watch and pray and report back on what they receive in their spirits.

### The Harvest Watchers

The second watchman category is the Harvest watchman. Small towers were built in the middle of the vineyards and fields. Watchmen stayed in these and watched for thieves, wild animals, fires, locusts, etc. They would sound an alarm if anything threatened the future harvest. As the crops matured, they also watched for the ripened fruit.

We need intercessors who watch and pray over the assembly, always on the lookout for thieves, or demonic “wild animals”, or other threats to the well-being of the body.

### The Worshipers

The other category of prophetic ministry is that of worshipers. While we all worship, there are some that the Holy Spirit anoints especially for worship. A worshiper is not doing anything *for* the Lord, or *with* the Lord, but is ministering *unto* the Lord. Worship is a function of the spirit and is spirit-to-Spirit, not soul-to-Spirit. Look at the scenes in Heaven in Revelation and read the expressions of worship by those in attendance in the Throne Room of God.

We need prophetic worshipers who can, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, express to God the fullness of our adoration and love for the Lord. But we also need prophetic worshipers and intercessors that pray the type of prayers that are mixed with incense on the Golden Altar before God.

Revelation 5:8 NASB

- (8) When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 8:3-4 NASB

- (3) Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.
- (4) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

These are “prophetic prayers” because they are part of the completing of the purpose of God as His judgment comes on the lawless.

## 3. Prophets

New Testament prophets are different than Old Testament prophets. Also, a prophet is different than one who prophesies. One can prophesy regularly and still not be a prophet. Paul said that all may prophesy one by one. He said that we all should desire to prophesy so that the Church could be edified. Prophecy should be universal in the Body of Christ because the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy as mentioned earlier in the lesson. Yet, Paul clearly says that all are not prophets.

1 Corinthians 12:29 NASB

- (29) All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not *workers of miracles*, are they?

The answer to each of these questions is clearly no. Then, what is the difference between prophesying and being a prophet?

The gift of prophecy is a gift of the Holy Spirit to a person.

1 Corinthians 12:7-10 NASB

- (7) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
- (8) For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;
- (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
- (10) and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

The gift of a Prophet is a gift of Jesus to His People—His Church.

Ephesians 4:11 NASB

- (11) And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

Commonly called the 5-fold Ministry, these are gifts of men to the Body. Some call these *offices* but I think it better to call them *functions*. When we speak of *offices* it reminds me of an organization but when we speak of *functions* it is more in the manner of an organism. We do not all have the same function, but there is a diversity of function so that corporately we can manifest the full ministry of Jesus in the earth.

Each function is an aspect of the ministry of Jesus. The Apostle is Jesus manifesting His ministry as the Apostle of the Father through a person. The Prophet is Jesus manifesting His ministry as a Prophet through a person and so it is with Evangelist, Shepherd and Teacher.

Since these functions are people, we can think of them as callings. As a matter of fact, I believe that these are what Paul referred to as the “high calling” of Jesus. While we are born into the Family, we are called to work and some are even called to a “higher” work.

We become children of God by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can do nothing to earn our position in Christ. However, the work he has called us to do is a different matter. We have to be trained properly for work. In other words we have to “qualify” for work and if that is true, we can also be “disqualified”.

Paul speaks of this in relation to himself (that should make us pause and think!).

1 Corinthians 9:27 NASB

- (27) but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

The word for “disqualified” means “unapproved”, “rejected” or “worthless” (Strong’s # G96). Paul used sports terminology to show that we needed training and discipline in order to do the work that He called us to do. Without training and discipline we could become worthless and unapproved for the work.

Peter said it this way:

2 Peter 1:8 NASB

- (8) For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the original, this is the word for “useless” (Strong’s definition):

G692 “argos” From G1 (as a negative particle) and G2041; inactive, that is, unemployed; (by implication) lazy, useless: - barren, idle, slow.

If the qualities that Peter is telling us about are developed in us, then we will be employed in the Kingdom of God; we will not be inactive.

The 5-fold ministry functions are “employment opportunities”. Jesus has pre-selected (called, elected) some for these functions. But those so called must mature or grow into them.

Most of the clearly seen functions of the Old Testament Prophet have been *divided and diffused, dispersed and distributed* among the people of God by the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant. What, then, does a New Testament Prophet do?

## **What a Prophet Does**

One function of a prophet grows out of the Intercessor Ministry and that is a watchman after the manner of Ezekiel. I call this type a *Prophet of Repentance*. His job is to warn the people of approaching judgment from the Lord and their need of repentance. He must so identify with the people that to not warn them would cause him to incur the judgment along with them. This is part of his motivation.

Ezekiel 3:17 NASB

(17) "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.

To me, the Repentance Prophet is what is needed in the American Church and in terms of our corporate walk one of the most valuable functions of the prophetic for the purity of the Church.

I believe that most of the New Testament Prophet’s work relates to the corporate expression of Christ and to the fulfilling of God’s purpose according to His timeline. Usually, instead of individually focused words of the nature of the general or basic prophetic functions of the Holy Spirit, New Testament Prophets are more concerned with

- 1) the overall plan of God,
- 2) the key events of His timeline, and
- 3) calling of His workers.

Reasons for the prophetic:

- Exhort and confirm (Acts 15:32)
- Minimize unbelief ( I Cor. 14:24-25)
- Eliminate boredom—provide fresh anointing

## **The Place of the Prophet**

The place and function of a Prophet plays a key role in the purposes of God. They form part of the Church foundation along with the apostles and Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:20-21 NASB

(20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,

(21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

These scriptures are not talking about the Old Testament prophets because the apostles are mentioned first. When referring to the Old Testament, the scriptures usually say “the law and the prophets”.

It is to the apostles and prophets that God reveals His mysteries. They then make those known to the rest of the people of God.

Ephesians 3:5 NASB

(5) which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

God has set an order of importance (of function not value) in the Church, which puts the apostles, prophets, and teachers at the head of the list.

1 Corinthians 12:28 NASB

(28) And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.

The meaning of “appointed”: Strong's #**G5087**, *tithēmi*; *to place, lay, set*: it is translated in the NASB as “appointed (6), assign (2), committed (1), conceived (1), destined (1), down \*(4), falling (1), fixed (1), kept (1), kneeling \*(2), knelt \*(3), laid (22), laid aside (1), laid down (1), lay (4), lay...down (2), lay down (8), laying (2), lays down (1), made (4), make (4), offer (1), placed (4), present (1), purposed (1), put (15), puts (2), puts...away (1), putting (1), reached (1), serves (1), set...down (1), set down (1), sink (1)”.

This word is translated 22 times as “laid”. When read this way “God has laid in the church...” it gives us a different understanding than we may have previously entertained. This fits with the idea of the apostles and prophets as part of the foundation. When a “church” is built, the order of ministry that is required to be laid in the “church” is first the apostles, second, the prophets, thirdly, the teachers, then miracles, etc.

## ***Giving and Receiving Prophecy***

When giving or receiving prophecy there are three areas that need to be considered by both the one giving the word and the one receiving it:

1. Revelation, (raw data)
2. Interpretation, and
3. Application.

The one who is prophesying may have a correct revelation but while giving it may interpret it in an incorrect manner or the one receiving the word may also interpret it incorrectly. If you do this it will cause a correct word to be perceived as an incorrect word.

Even if the first two steps occur correctly, many times the word will be applied to our life circumstances incorrectly. Usually, this happens in the area of timing. Many words may not be applicable to your situation until a future time or set of circumstances.

Timing is the hardest area for one who is prophetically called to deal with because our tendency is to think that everything is for “right now”. For a prophetic word to have impact it must be a *revelation* from the Holy Spirit which is *correctly interpreted* and *expressed at the correct time* according to the plan and purpose of the Lord.

## ***Tests of Prophetic Relationship to the Lord***

There are six character areas in the prophet that must be purified and consecrated to the Lord before the Lord can fully release the prophet into the fullness of his ministry. The Lord will put these areas to the test until they are acceptable to Him. (I have grouped these in pairs that go together in the way the Lord works on us).

- **Surrender and consecration:** willingness to speak the hard word and accept the persecution and reproach that results from its delivery.
- **Honesty and integrity:** ability to remain silent when God has not spoken regardless of the apparent need of the moment.
- **Maturity and security:** willingness to be silent when God has spoken or given revelation but requires you to keep quiet about it.

Before maturing a prophet has to pass all of these tests. Many times prophetic people act like a child who has a secret and can't wait to tell it to someone. Another problem area is the tendency to always want to get the credit for God speaking—almost, a “I told you so” syndrome.

As you begin to move in the prophetic, there are three areas that must be addressed quickly.

- **Timing**—not only must the word be a correct word from the Lord, it must be delivered at the correct time and in the appropriate place. Timing is difficult because prophets tend to be task-oriented people. They want to accomplish the goal. They put agendas before relationships. Rather than wait on the proper time, they want to give the word and move on.
- **Harshness**—there is a tendency for those newly moving in the prophetic to give harsh words, full of doom and gloom. Consider the heart of the Lord and deliver the prophetic with the proper emotions. Don't make the mistake of Moses when he was angry with the people and God wasn't.
- **Pride**—we puff up very quickly. Just remember, God can speak through any Ass—just like He did to Balaam!

Prophetic people tend to wear themselves out. Jeremiah gives us an important perspective.

Jeremiah 12:5 NASB

- (5) "If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, Then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?"

There are some important lessons here. First, we should evaluate ourselves and not extend into areas for which we don't have the strength or stamina. Second, we need to find our “cruising speed”—the pace that doesn't wear us out. Third, expect the Lord to provide ways of strengthening or increasing our abilities in order to accomplish His work.

# CAUTIONS

## **CAUTION: POTENTIAL PROBLEM AREAS**

Prophetic people (those who are open to being used by the Holy Spirit) typically will have one of two basic problems that hinder them from contributing to the Body.

- **Inferiority**—In the twelfth chapter of Corinthians Paul speaks of those who would say that because they weren't the hand, or the ear, or the eye then they weren't a part of the Body. We look at others and their function in the Body and our feelings of inferiority cause us to believe that because we don't have the same function as others then we must not be a part.
- **Superiority**—In this same chapter Paul goes on to speak of the other side of the problem. The eye can't say to the hand, "I have no need of you." This is one of the greatest dangers to one who is prophetically gifted. Pride causes them to begin to feel superior to the other members of the Body and that they don't need them to be "spiritual".

**NOTE:** God is no respecter of persons. If either of these attitudes is loose in the assembly then the Holy Spirit will shut off the flow of the gifts and His anointing.

## **CAUTION: POTENTIAL PROBLEM AREAS**

These problem areas are applicable to both the prophetic ministry and to the Prophets and are presented as a combined list.

- **False spirituality:** The person assumes a persona that he believes to be the way a "spiritual" person would look and act. As a consistent expression of the prophetic, they can take on a "wild-eyed" expression, speak in a deep resonant voice, utilize "spiritual language", that is, "Thus saith the Lord God" in King James English, and raise their voices in loud declaratory shouting. While at times, some of these things *may be* appropriate; they should not be the norm.
- **Always right:** Because the person is hearing from God, he will begin to take a stance of always being right, hearing right, and speaking right. They forget that we hold the treasure in an earthen vessel.
- **Uncorrectable:** This is a result of the "always right" problem. Once a person believes that he is right, it becomes very difficult for them to receive anything that would differ from their perception.
- **Clone syndrome:** "If you were really close to the Lord like I am, you would be doing the same thing that I am doing (and doing it the same way)". God doesn't produce clones; He produces sons and daughters.
- **Gifts = character:** This becomes an incorrect assumption among prophetic people. Gifts are just that—gifts. They are not earned nor bestowed as an act of approval. Character development is a requirement of maturing in God. It doesn't matter how many nor how powerful the gifts, we are not excused from the proper development of godly character.
- **Gifts = doctrinal accuracy:** This problem is a corollary of the one above and is very dangerous to the Church. Gifted and prophetic people make the incorrect

assumption that God has put His stamp of approval on their doctrine. For some reason, Prophets always want to operate in other gifting areas when they are not called in that manner. The result is muddled, confused, and erroneous teaching that leads many astray from the purposes of God, which causes hurt, bitterness, and unforgiveness..

- **Gifts = maturity:** Gifts of Grace are given to all levels of maturity. They are not merit badges, nor earned by consecration. Sometimes this will encourage some to “fake it” so as not to appear un-gifted.
- **Anointing hype:** Methodology or style does not produce anointing. Neither gifts nor anointing are a divine endorsement of ministry style. The anointing is not dependent upon mood or atmosphere. Methodology becomes a prop and leads to hype and exaggeration. We desire to never look weak; however, Paul delighted in weakness (see 2 Cor. 9-10).
- **High mindedness:** Prophetic people need to guard against becoming high minded and thinking more highly of themselves than they should. Most prophetic people do not have a gift of leadership, which is why the scriptures link prophets with apostles. It is usually a mistake for the prophetically gifted to lead the prophetically gifted. When this happens there is no balance to the prophetic. A leader of prophetically gifted people needs to understand the gifting and operation of the prophetic, but doesn't necessarily need to be a prophetically gifted person himself. It is desirable for them to not be in order to add balance to the prophetic group.