

“I decided that it was not wisdom that enabled poets to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find in seers and prophets who deliver all their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean.” - Socrates

Over the past few years I have received two questions, probably more than any others, concerning the prophetic. The first is “How do you do that?” The second is, “what is the difference between a Prophet and one operating in the gift of prophecy?” The first is a relatively simple answer. The Lord knows you and He reveals things to His servants. The Holy Spirit speaks to me. The second is a little more difficult and lengthy to answer, but I will make an attempt.

Earlier I used a scripture to convey that all can prophesy (I Cor. 14:31). The only problem is that most don't and the ones that do seem to want to be christened as “Prophet.” I want to set a precedent that even though most of the Old Testament prophecy was done by Prophets, many prophecies were given by others. I want to convey this by using a chart.

| Old Testament Prophet | Old Testament Prophetic Gift | Scripture Reference |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Moses | | Deut. 18:15-19 |
| | 70 elders | Numbers 11:25 |
| Aaron | | Exodus 7:1 |
| Abraham | | Genesis 20:1-7 |
| Balaam | | Numbers 22-24 |
| Samuel | | I Samuel 3-19-21 |
| | King Saul | I Samuel 10:1-13, 19:18-24 |
| Nathan | | II Samuel 12:1-23 |
| | David | Psalms 22 |
| | Eldad and Medad | Numbers 11:27 |
| Gad | | II Samuel 24 |
| Ahijah | | I Kings 11:29-40 |
| Oded | | II Chron. 15:8 |
| Elijah and Elisha | | I Kings 18, II Kings 2 |
| Huldah | | II Kings 22 |
| 12 Minor Prophets | | Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Nahum, etc. |
| 4 Major Prophets | | Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel |
| Micaiah | | I Kings 22:8-18 |
| | King Saul's messengers | I Samuel 19:20 |
| | Eliezer | II Chron. 20:37 |

The New Testament has a similar pattern.

| New Testament Prophets | New Testament Prophetic Gift | Scripture Reference |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| John the Baptist | | Matt. 11:7-15 |
| Jesus | | Matt., Mark, Luke, John |
| Agabus | | Acts 21:10 |
| Judas Barsabas | | Acts 15:22, 32 |
| Silas | | Acts 15:32 |
| | John the Apostle | Revelation |
| | Philips 4 daughters | Acts 21:8,9 |
| | Zacharias | Luke 1:67 |
| | 12 men | Acts 19 |

The point to all of this is that many prophesied, but were never considered prophets. Others carried great anointing and other mantles such as King David and the Apostle John but their office was not as Prophet, but as something else. I will give what I believe to be the main functions of the office of the Prophet.

1. The office is given and anointed by the Lord specifically.

Ephesians 4:11 says; and He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers..

“Prophets are vessels whom Christ chooses to function constantly and accurately in the realm of the word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discernment of spirits, confirmation, revelation, illumination, prophetic utterance, prediction, visions, correction, and ministry confirmation.” (Damazio) The Father gives gifts that we are born with (Rom.12:6-8). The Spirit gives gifts to those who ask for it and when the gift is necessary (I Cor. 12). Jesus selects the five-fold ministry office and appoints people to them. A self-proclaimed Prophet will only go as far as his natural ability will allow, but a true Prophet understands that Jesus gave them the office and they are an extension of Jesus on the earth.

2. A Prophet moves in the realm of presbytery in order to confirm the ministry of others.

In Acts 13:1-2, the prophets along with others were ministering to the Lord when the Spirit told them to set apart or confirm Barnabas and Saul (Paul). One of the most vital functions of the prophet is to confirm the calling of other people for ministry and anoint or set them apart for that specific vocation. In the Old Testament the kings had to be anointed by the prophets, in the New Testament every leader should be anointed by the prophet in order to establish ministry.

3. A Prophet has the authority to bring correction and establish order.

This needs to be made clear because not every one who prophecies has the authority to do this. This is one of the major differences between the office and the gift. One operating in the gift

should never seek to bring correction. Their prophetic insight should strengthen, build up, and encourage. The office of the prophet gives them the right to establish order and correction when necessary. We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). **Nathan was the only one who had the authority to correct King David (II Sam. 12).**

4. The Prophet has the ability to see for and speak to a city, a region, and even a nation.

I believe that a true prophet can know the mind of the Lord for an entire country. My declaration for the past few years has been: “God is not looking to build churches, he is looking to take cities.” What I mean is that the desire of the Lord has never been just to increase the number of members belonging to a church, but to overthrow entire kingdoms. Most Pastors that I know pray for revival, but their prayers seem to be limited to their own church. Revival may visit and rest upon and in a church but the purpose of revival is to flood the city. A Prophet can see the plan for a nation and begin preparing the people for what the Lord intends to do. Jonah knew God's intention for Nineveh and although He fought it, when he released the prophetic anointing the entire city was transformed.

5. Only a Prophet can judge another Prophet.

The spirit of the prophets are subject to prophets. I believe every church should have seasoned prophets that can judge the prophecies of others correctly. We have allowed so many things to go unchecked concerning the prophetic because someone who was known as a Prophet was given a free pass to do and say whatever they wanted. All Prophets must be in order, and all prophecy should be evaluated for authenticity. If a Prophet is afraid to have their prophecies reviewed, then we should be careful because a true Prophet is only as good as the Word they proclaim. If it is the word of the Lord, there is nothing to fear.

The prophetic anointing is not the divine right of the prophet. Anyone can prophecy (I Cor. 14:31). Here are a few guidelines to go by for someone who is going to prophesy.

1. Prophecy is incomplete and ever increasing.

We know in part so, we prophecy in part (I Cor. 13:9). Never use words like forever. I heard a Prophet say over a minister that is called to be a Pastor that he would always be in the church he now resides serving under the Pastors. It broke my heart for the man. This man is an anointed mouthpiece for the Lord, but a word came that limited his potential. We don't know what will happen forever. The word of the Lord is progressive.

2. Prophecy is conditional- even if the conditions are not stated.

One mistake people make is that when they receive a prophecy, they don't find out what conditions the Lord has placed on it. Abram was given a 7 fold promise of blessing in Genesis 12. This was the word of God upon his life. He had one condition. He had to leave his father's house and country. The blessing was there but Abram had to obey first.

3. Prophecy is timeless unless dates are put on it.

Never put dates unless you know exactly what it is. You may hear something like 6 and so you may say 6 weeks or 6 months, but God was saying 6 days or 6 years. Remember God is not in time, He is in eternity. His purpose for Israel was to be in Canaan in a short number of days but it took them 40 years. Even though it took a longer time, the word still came to pass.

4. Prophecy is not the only way the Spirit leads.

Many people run from prophetic conference to apostolic convention, to the latest, greatest camp meeting searching for a prophecy. The Spirit also leads by an inner witness. Prophecy is at its best when the Lord has already deposited something in the internal part of someone's being. It then supplies confirmation. The Spirit also leads by the written Word. The written Word is prophetic. Before I make any major decision in life, I ask the Lord to show me in His word. Once I have a scripture, then my faith becomes resolute.

5. Prophecy is ministry. Be Sensitive.

Don't make the mistake of prophesying at someone, minister to them. When we prophesy we are speaking the mind and heart of Jesus. We represent Him in these moments. Don't get caught up in how people think of your prophecy. Focus on the one the Lord is speaking to. Ben Franklin said, "Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment." People respond to the anointing. Do not allow their response to influence the word given.

6. Prophecy is self-control and discipline.

Many immature prophetic people will get so excited when they sense the anointing that they do things that are uncharacteristic of the Holy Spirit. This can become a distraction and put the attention on the one giving and not the Lord. Proverbs 25:28 says: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. When someone prophesies they must remain in control of their expressions and emotions. It is a great feeling when God's existence releases His anointing, but we must become experienced in His presence.

7. Prophecy must be given from the right motive(s).

A motive is a person's reason for doing something. Better stated, it is the goal or objective of our actions. The first objective for prophecy must be to direct people to encounter a true and living God in the person of Jesus. Our objective must be to "reveal the passions, desires, and pleasure of the Father to His church." (Bickle)

If we prophesy for selfish gain or because we want people to know how gifted we are, then we dishonor the Lord and rob Him of His glory and honor and praise.

8. Prophecy does not begin with "thus saith the Lord".

Some have abused this phrase as if by using it as their stamp of authority. God sits on His word and He alone will validate it and bring it to pass. I think it is alright to use it when you know you are divinely inspired; however we should never pretend to be God.

“When we pretend to be God and play God, we do so without the benefit of God’s character and we redefine good and evil”(Zacharias 47). In I Samuel 3:19 it says that as Samuel grew the Lord was with him and none of his words fell to the ground. Part of the prophetic prayer from chapter one that we could add would be this. Holy Spirit, just as Samuel never missed when prophesying, anoint me to only speak your word, so that when your name is assigned to what I have communicated, it will only convey your message.

Observation or Perception

Luke 17:20:The Kingdom cometh not by observation.

Many people prophesy through observation. A true prophetic word comes through perception.

Observation – Inspection, Ocular evidence, To watch carefully especially with attention to details or behavior for the purpose of arriving at a judgment.

Perception – Discernment, a mental image, to know, intuitive cognition.

Deut. 29:4, Job 9:11, Job 23:8, Job 33:14, Is. 6:9-10, Matt. 13:14-15, Mark 4:12, Acts 28:26, Prov. 1:2, Mark 18:7-8, Luke 8:46, John 4:19, Acts 10:34, Acts 17:22, Acts 27:10, II Cor. 7:8.

All of the above scriptures talk about perception. Sometimes the word is used to convey comprehension, other times it means to know or to discern. The main point is that prophetic inspiration is birthed through deep rooted relationship with the Lord. As he reveals His heart to us, we begin to see things as He sees. Proverbs 29:18 says: “Where there is no vision the people perish...” The word for vision means prophetic revelation. Without prophetic revelation the people perish. Prophetic revelation is seeing what God sees. It is divine disclosure to the hidden things of God. He chooses to reveal these things in order to establish His covenant with His people.

Observation is selfishly motivated. When we observe, we only see what we want to see. It is easy to prophesy over someone that looks like a million dollars that God is going to make them successful. Perception sees what God sees. It sees the poor man on the street and calls his future as a wealthy businessman into existence.

Acts 4:13 is a great illustration of the difference between observation and perception. Peter and John have been arrested for preaching about Christ. The high priest and leaders began to question the two disciples power. After listening to their response, the rulers observed the inexperience, lack of education, and ignorance of Peter and John. Although, through observation they saw men that lacked training they began to marvel and perceive that they had been with

Jesus.

The greatest thing, in my opinion, about the prophetic is this. No matter what place in life a person holds, the voice of God releases truth about that persons destiny. God always looks at us in a state of fulfillment and success. Most of the time, He speaks in reference to our future, never our past. Jeremiah 29:11 says “God has a future for us.”