

# PROPHETS

There are three classifications of prophets:

1. "The" Prophet, Jesus Christ.
2. The prophets of the Old Testament period.
3. The prophets of the New Testament period.

After the people saw Jesus perform the miracle of feeding the five thousand with only five barley loaves and two fish, they declared, "This is of a truth THE PROPHET who is to come into the world" (St. Jn. 6:14). Then again after hearing Jesus's profound words about the Holy Spirit, some began to say, "This certainly is THE PROPHET" (St. Jn. 7:40).

The words of the Lord recorded in Deuteronomy 18:18-22 spoke of a special prophet who would have the characteristics of Moses and he would speak God's words. The people of Israel were waiting for such a prophet to come, and when John the Baptist began to preach, many thought he was surely that special prophet. However, Peter later identified Jesus as being that Prophet (Acts 3:22-26).

Jesus was "the Prophet!"

The people in the Old Testament that proclaimed the divine purposes of salvation and glory that was to come were called prophets. The prophet and the seer of the Old Testament are the same individuals (1 Samuel 9:9). They were considered by the nation of Israel as particular ones set aside by God to speak His words and perform His deeds. They were looked upon as ones who had immediate intercourse with God. The Holy Spirit would come upon them, such as, Samson (Judges 14:6), Eldad, Medad (Numbers 11:26), Saul (1 Samuel 10:10) and Azariah (2 Chr. 15:1). It appears that the prophets of the Old Testament were temporarily controlled by the Spirit of God that came to rest upon them. In contrast, in the New Testament the Spirit of God comes within the prophet and seeks to control, not only his speech, but his nature. In the Old Testament it was a temporal control, but in the New Testament, it is a progressive incorporation of the word into the spirit of the prophet.

The prophet (prophetess) of the New Testament period preached the divine counsels of grace already accomplished and foretold the purposes of God in the future.

The New Testament refers to the following Old Testament prophets: Elijah and Jeremiah (Mt. 1:17), Isaiah (Mt. 4:14), Jonah (Mt. 12:39), Daniel (Mt. 24:15) and Joel (Acts 2:16). And the same word that is used to refer to the Old Testament prophets in the New Testament is used also to refer to New Testament prophets.

"Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one 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." (Acts 11:27, 28). Later he prophesied of Paul's imprisonment (Acts 21:11). This clearly identifies the status and function of those who are called to be prophets after the ascension of Jesus into the heavens.

There were prophets and teachers in the city of Antioch (Acts 13:1) and one of them speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). It can easily be established that Paul was a prophet by such passages as 1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 2; 1 Timothy 3; and 1 Cor. 15. Obviously whoever spoke the prophecy of Acts 13:2 was not either Paul or Barnabas, but one of the five, and he was called a prophet. Judas, Silas and Agabus were also called prophets (Acts 15:32; 21:10).

In the case of the church at Antioch, the prophets functioned to set aside two others, Paul and Barnabas, for the work assigned to them by God, they also being prophets and teachers, and by this sending forth of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas become body building apostles. A New Testament prophetic ministry recognizes the will of God for another, and participates in the act of releasing that one for the task assigned him by the Holy Spirit.

God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets (1 Cor. 12:28) and these are to prepare the saints for the work of the ministry until the church grows into the full measure of the stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13). Did the church attain to that measure before the scriptures were canonized? Has the church come into the unity of the true knowledge of the Son of God or into the unity of the faith? Consequently there remains a need for prophets today to complete the work necessary for a mature church.

The noun "prophecy" (propheteia) means to speak forth, hence to speak forth the utterances of God. Paul writing to the church at Rome exhorted them to prophesy in proportion to their faith. "If prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith" (Romans 12:6). Paul also states that one of the grace gifts given by the Holy Spirit was the gift of prophecy and compared it to a functioning member of a living body.

A prophet is a person given by God to the church. It is an ascension gift by Christ to the church (Eph. 4:8-11). No one can take this honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was (Heb. 5:4). It is by commission, not because of the spiritual gifts he possesses; rather it is an act of God.

Note the contrast of 1 Cor. 12:28, "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 verse mentions three classifications of people and five different things. A prophet may have gifts of healings but that does not make him a prophet. It is by commission! A person may prophesy but that does not make him a prophet. He simply has the gift of prophesy given by the Holy Spirit to edify, exhort and comfort the body of Christ.

The facts are:

1. There are prophets of the Old Testament and prophets of the New Testament.
2. The prophets of the New Testament preach, declare the present will of God and foretell the future.
3. There is an office of a prophet and that by a commission from God.
4. They are one of the ascension gifts of Christ.
5. They are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.
6. They will remain in the church until it comes into the unity of the faith and the true knowledge of the Son of God.
7. They are separated from the local church by the local presbytery.
8. The saints are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.

These eight New Testament facts clearly demonstrate that the prophet is alive and well on planet earth!

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