

What is a New Testament Prophet?

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"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until 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 fulness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:11-16, NIV).

FIRST

HE OR SHE IS A SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVER WHO IS FIRST CALLED AND SEPARATED TO THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL. This isn't a believer who chooses to be called. This is a believer whom the call has chosen him or her. Many today ASPIRE to be something God has not called them to be. Many today call themselves into the ministry. God knows He didn't call them and everybody else that has to endure the WANNA-BE knows it too. The anointing is just not evident or at best, inconsistent. Then, to make matters worst, some of these WANNA-BE preachers even title themselves a "prophet." (Probably because no one would ever let them be their "pastor" and probably because "prophet" sounds more superspiritual than "pastor" or "teacher" anyhow.) But a true New Testament prophet is one of the five-fold ministry gifts of Jesus to His church; not a loose canon wandering around with an aire of superspirituality. I Corinthians 12:28 says, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers..." Also see Amos 7:12-15.

SECOND

THE NEW TESTAMENT PROPHET IS A SEASONED MINISTER; NEVER A NOVICE IN THE MINISTRY. God never sets a novice preacher into this office. If He did, the minister would either get lifted up with pride, compromise under the persecution, abuse the gift, or die early by not knowing how to handle that kind of anointing and power flowing through him. The process of a prophet's calling (or for that matter, any ministry calling) usually goes something like this: First God calls a man or woman to the preaching/teaching ministry in a general way to see if they obey the calling and to see if they are faithful to the ministry. He may give that minister a glimpse of His ultimate destination for them at the initial calling; but the newly called minister is not yet mature enough to handle it. But over a period of time when he or she is being proved, that ordained minister begins to discover how best God uses them. Through the minister's personal prayer and Bible reading, God even gives more illumination as to the specific office He wishes for them to fulfill. Further confirmation comes to the minister as other more mature leaders in the Body of Christ vouch for his or her giftings and maturity. Then, based on all these dealings from God over some time span, the minister comes to know the specific five-fold ministry office(s) he or she must fulfill, whether it be apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. Simultaneously, the people of God are now ready to receive that minister in this specific capacity because the minister has demonstrated the character, maturity, experience, and seasoned giftedness which commands their respect in a most natural way.

THIRD

HE IS A MINISTER WHO IS GIVEN TO HAVING "DREAMS, VISIONS AND REVELATIONS." In the Old Testament the prophet was often called a "SEER" because he could see and know things supernaturally. In I Corinthians 14, talking about prophets, it says, "if anything be REVEALED to another..."

FOURTH

A PROPHET IS A MINISTER WHO HAS AT LEAST TWO OF THE REVELATION GIFTS PLUS PROPHECY OPERATING CONSISTENTLY IN HIS MINISTRY. (See my other minibook "The Omniscient Gifts Of The Spirit") Out of the nine manifestation gifts listed in I Corinthians 12:7-11, three reveal something. These are: the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, and the discerning of spirits. The word of knowledge is a fragment of supernaturally revealed information about the present or past. The word of wisdom is a fragment of supernaturally revealed information about the momentary, near, or far future. The two are different in that the word of knowledge is more "facts from God's mind" and the word of wisdom is more "plans from God's mind." The discerning of spirits is Divine-given ability to see or hear into the spiritual realm; like seeing an angel or demon, or a visitation from Jesus. Prophecy, of course, is a vocal or utterance gift enabling one to speak forth the mind of God as it is given at that moment by the Holy Spirit.

Prophecy is "Forth-telling." The Word of Knowledge is "Fact-telling." And the Word of Wisdom is "Fore-telling." All three of these have the Holy Spirit as their spontaneous source.

FIFTH

TO REALLY CONSTITUTE THE PROPHET'S OFFICE, THERE MUST BE A CONTINUED MANIFESTATION OF THESE GIFTS. Everyone who prophesies is not a prophet. But every prophet will prophesy. Everyone who is used in the revelation gifts is not a prophet. But every prophet will move in the revelation gifts. All Spirit-filled believers can, and should, be used in these gifts from time to time. However, the prophet's office will have a continuous stream of these manifestations in order to help him accomplish his mission to the Body of Christ.