

# Truth and Spirit Ministries

## **Biblical Insight on Prophetic Ministry**

**By Terry and Denise Bostic**

Although there are a wide variety of divine gifts that the Lord has bestowed upon members in the Church, in this month's teaching we will be speaking in particular about the ministry gift of the *Prophet*. When speaking of the prophet we will also include the *Prophetess* or female counterpart of the prophetic ministry. Although there is much that all prophetic ministries have in common, it's important that we do not attempt to pigeonhole or lump all prophetic ministry into one category. The Lord has deemed it necessary to have different levels and gift mixes of the prophetic in the Church in order to minister to the saints at every stage of growth on their journey to maturity in Christ.

Although all spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament scriptures were given shortly after the Lord's resurrection and at the inception of the Church, there is still much misunderstanding today among many in the body of Christ concerning them and most especially the ministry of the Prophet. The Lord's true intentions for all the gifts are given to us in the Word of God, yet there are a lot of saints that have not been able to benefit from the power contained within them due to lack of proper teaching and seeing them demonstrated in power on a consistent basis.

First of all it must be said that all believers can operate in the gifts of the Spirit as he wills but not all believers will be called of the Lord into the offices of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher. All spiritual gifts come from God and he determines who gets what and when. For example, although all believers may prophesy, not all are prophets as we are taught in I Corinthians 14 (especially verses 5 & 31). All Spirit-filled believers may operate in the gifts of the Spirit as he determines, (including the simple gift of prophecy) for the edification and encouragement of the Church but the prophet will most often operate in several gifts of the Spirit and with a higher degree of revelation and authority given by the Lord and his divine purposes.

There have been some in the Church who erroneously believe that they are called to be a prophet just because they can prophesy. There is much more that comes with the calling of the Prophet however than just prophesying. When one is truly has the call of a prophet or prophetess, he or she will receive confirmation by the Spirit through others in the Church and they will operate in several gifts of the Spirit on a more frequent basis than most believers due to their calling as a minister of the gospel of Christ. Also, because they are ministers of the gospel, prophets will also preach and/or teach the word of God. They will operate in these divine gifts as the Spirit leads and determines based upon God's divine purposes.

A lot of people within the Church have fought against the ministry of the prophet down through the Church age. There have been many that have chosen to reject or ignore the ministry of the prophet due to its highly controversial and authoritative nature. After all, a prophet or prophetess claims to speak a word directly from the Lord or the Spirit of God. Although a lot of believers may not realize this, whether one is an apostle, evangelist, pastor or teacher, he or she is still a representative or speaks for the Lord - that is, if they are truly legitimate. At times, one may be responsible for speaking forth a rhema word of God and another the written word of God *but it all comes from the same source*.

In the Greek language there is the *logos* (3056), or **written** word of God and then there is the *rhema* (4487), or **spoken** word of God. Of course there are the collective words (logos) of God written down for us in the Bible, but there is also the spoken words (rhema) of God where He desires to speak His mind through someone that He chooses through preaching, teaching, command or *prophecy* in the present. The word rhema means *that which is or has been uttered by the living voice, thing spoken, word*. (Logos- *Mark 7:13, Hebrews 13:7, James 1:22*, Rhema- *John 3:34, 8:47, Romans 10:8-10, 15, 17, 12:6, I Corinthians 12:10, I Timothy 4:14*) Since the creation of man, God has spoken to and through people. He has not changed and still does so today as well.

Some believe that by attacking or ignoring the ministry of the Prophet and prophetic gifting that they can cause it to disappear altogether. We cannot deceive ourselves into thinking that we can remove what the Lord has so divinely placed within his own body and with great purpose. Since the ministry of the Prophet and also any level of prophetic gifting have already been given by the Lord himself, those who have the prophetic call will surely keep resurfacing and operating due to the fact that the Lord is still giving these gifts to those whom he has ordained. The scripture declares:

**“For the gifts and his call are irrevocable”. (Romans 11:29)**

This would include the ministry gifts of the prophet and prophetess, the gifts of the Spirit which would include prophecy also visions, dreams and the like. (As mentioned in Joel's prophecy and confirmed by the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.) Since these gifts were given by the Lord for the benefit of his Church, instead of us lagging behind in these gifts, we should be much further along in flowing, operating and receiving the powerful benefits that the Lord has intended for us all along. Since many in the Church have resisted, misunderstood or lacked proper teaching about this vital ministry however, we have lost valuable ground that needs to be retaken.

### **Myths Concerning New Testament Prophets**

Over the years there have been many sincere believers asking questions about the prophetic ministry and I believe that this desire to know is fueled by the Spirit of God. The very fact that God has given his people a hunger in this area proves that the prophetic ministry will not be going away any time too soon. Although the word says that one day prophecies will cease, according to the Bible it will not cease during the age of grace and the New Testament Church.

In this teaching we will be addressing many questions that have been asked and provide biblical answers to them. We will debunk some myths and false mindsets concerning the prophetic ministry and endeavor to bring clarity to that which has been unclear. As we gain understanding and wisdom about these spiritual gifts we will also be able to receive their powerful benefits and also learn how to move prophetically as an entire Church. Let's begin with myth number one.

**1. Prophets are no longer needed under the dispensation of the New Testament and since there are no more prophets today, anyone who claims to be a prophet is false.**

But what does the New Testament itself teach us? The Lord deemed this ministry necessary for the entire body of Christ, which would include you since you are also a part of it. Many would not think of being without the ministry of the pastor for any amount of time would they? Just as the Lord has shown us that the Apostle, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher are essential for the worldwide body of Christ, so also is the Prophet.

The Apostle Paul gave clear teaching in his epistles concerning this.

**“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.”**

Although everyone does not have the same gifting, we each have our own part (calling or purpose) in the Body of Christ but one cannot say to the other, “I don't need you!” (I **Corinthians 12:12-26**) Yet, this is what many have done to the ministry of the Prophet and also to those believers who have the gift of prophecy as well. Again, the Lord has placed each one of us in the Body and for a divinely appointed purpose. When we receive the ministry of the Prophet, the Lord promises that we will be rewarded. (Matthew 10:41) The Prophets ministry is very much needed in the New Testament. First of all it is important to understand that prophets do not just prophesy. The ministry of the prophet or prophetess is much broader in scope than that.

- 1. For instance they help to lay the foundation of Christ within the Church, reveal divine mysteries from Christ to the Church and also help to teach the foundational truths of the New Covenant that helps the body of Christ to go on to maturity. (Ephesians 2:19-21, 3:2-11)**
- 2. Prophets prophesy by the gift of prophecy, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of prophecy helps to edify (build up) and encourage believers in the way of the Lord. (I Corinthians 14:1-4) Although all believers may prophesy, not all are prophets. New Testament Prophets will prophesy by revelation knowledge and with a higher degree of authority given to them from Christ as a minister of the Gospel. (Read I Corinthians 14:26-32) However all prophecy is to be weighed or judged.**

3. **Prophets do more than prophecy, they also help equip the saints for works of service in the area of prophetic ministry, can release the gifts of God to others, confirm gifts and callings through the prophetic word. As one part of the Lord's "5 fold" ministry team they also are responsible for preaching and teaching the truths of God to the saints so that they may grow into spiritual maturity. (Ephesians 4:11-15, Acts 13:1-3, I Timothy 1:18, 4:14)**
4. **Through prophecy Prophets can predict things to come to warn or prepare the Church, give out national and personal prophecies from the Lord and the Holy Spirit, provide divine counsel, wisdom, direction and insight to individual saints and the Church as a whole. (Acts 15:30-32, Acts 21:1-14, Revelation 10:11)**
5. **When we receive either a personal or cooperate (for the entire Church) prophetic word from God through the Prophet, it can help prepare us for the future and also warn us of danger or troubles to come. (Matthew 24, I Timothy 4:1, Acts 11:27-30, 21:1-14, 27:21-26)**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, isn't it wonderful that God would give us such wonderful benefits? We can't receive them however if we reject this God-ordained ministry by falling for the lies of those who teach that these gifts have been done away with.

Thank God that in the past several years there has been many that have been faithful to teach others and help equip the saints in the area of true prophetic ministry and at times even in the face of persecution by their brethren. Any time a truth is being restored in the Church it is not always easy and unfortunately there will be ignorance, excess, abuse, misuse and error; this does not mean however that we should "throw the baby out with the bathwater." The key to receiving restored truth from God is by receiving revelation knowledge of his word through the Spirit. (I Corinthians 2:9-14) When we hear teaching concerning the prophetic ministry, we must search the scriptures to see whether these things are so or not.

## **2. Some believe that a true prophet should never "miss it" or be wrong when they prophesy.**

There are a lot of people in the Church that become confused or may even reject a prophet because they believe that they may have "missed the mark" concerning a prophetic word or if their personal lives fall short of perfection. Old Testament Prophets were not infallible and neither are New Testament Prophets. To be infallible means *incapable of failure or error*. Fallible on the other hand means *liable to err*. I don't know about you but I know that it's an absolute fact that all humans are capable of making mistakes. Only God is infallible.

There are many examples of Prophets both in the Old and New Testaments that the sinned, had failures, weaknesses and made mistakes, yet God did not cease working in their lives but continued working mightily through them. Examples would include Abraham, Moses, Balaam, David, Jonah, Peter, James, Paul and others. God used fallible men to write infallible scriptures. These men although imperfect wrote scripture as they were carried along by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. (scriptures)

Sometimes believers today may falsely assume that someone has given a false prophecy because that word did not come to pass exactly as spoken. However, some prophecy is *conditional* and others are not. Let me explain. In scripture many times a prophet's prophecy was conditional based upon whether or not the hearers were obedient to God or not. It may have looked as though these prophets "missed it" when the word did not come to pass exactly as prophesied but in fact they did not. They were merely speaking for God. The Lord will at times speak to us through prophets about our future but that can be contingent upon our faith and obedience in God. There are many biblical examples to learn from in the Bible but for the sake of time, we will only give three.

Some examples would include the many prophets that God sent to Israel. The outcome of the prophecy depended on their obedience or disobedience to God. If they repented and turned to the Lord things would go well with them, if they didn't things would not. Also, Remember when God sent the Prophet Jonah to Nineveh with a divine message? When Jonah finally arrived in that city he prophesied that it would be destroyed in forty days. (Jonah 3:1-4) The Ninevites repented however and God had compassion on them and did not bring the destruction on them that he had threatened. (Jonah 3:10)

Another example would be when the Prophet Isaiah was sent by God to give a prophetic word to Hezekiah concerning his death. **"The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover."** Look at how definite and final this word sounded. After Isaiah left however, Hezekiah wept bitterly and sought the Lord in prayer and as a result, the Lord changed his mind. He then sent Isaiah back with a much different prophecy. Hezekiah was not only healed and God added fifteen years to his life, but God also delivered him and his entire city from the king of Assyria! (Isaiah 38:1-8) If this first prophecy would have been given today most people would have labeled Isaiah a false prophet, yet he was a true prophet of the Lord. When the Lord sent him back with a different message, Isaiah was obedient to speak the word of the Lord.

We should remember that Prophets are merely spokesmen for the Lord. We learn from these examples that repentance and prayer can change our future and destiny. God can literally "write or rewrite" our future with the prophetic word. We determine the final outcome by our obedience or disobedience however. Many do not realize this but with conditional prophecies the outcome really depends on whether we will follow God, be obedient and allow God to do what he desires to do in our lives. Not only does God speak our future, but because he dwells within us, we can too as we come into agreement with him! How powerful is that?

God has a plan or prophetic words for everyone's life but the fulfillment of God's perfect plan, purpose and will depends upon us. No, we do not make it happen (only God can do that) but we do need to cooperate with God throughout the process so that it can happen. Just think of how many people that did not truly live out God's divine purposes during their lives because they did not live for the Lord but for themselves or others! When we live for him and are led by his Spirit though, he can take us into our divine destiny.

Some prophecies are not conditional however. This includes end-time prophecies already recorded in the Bible. The Lord is the Alpha and Omega and sees the beginning to the end. He is all-knowing and all-seeing and has already spoken concerning the end of the age.

### **3. If a Prophet's prophecy does not come to pass, this makes him a false prophet.**

Just because a prophet may speak a prophecy that does not come to pass does not necessarily make him a false prophet. The prophecy could be conditional and it was negated through disobedience or maybe they spoke presumptuously. Even under the Old Testament God did not punish a prophet that spoke presumptuously or may have missed it, but he did strictly judge those whose prophecies led his people into idolatry and away from him. There is a difference between the two and to know a true prophet from a false one we must look at the overall fruit or life of the prophet instead of focusing on one prophecy that failed to come to pass. People can miss it by making the mistake of speaking presumptuously or by speaking a word out of season. This in itself does not make someone a false prophet, they just made a mistake. No one is perfect. You see, God cannot find a perfect person to work through *because they don't exist*.

Under the Old Testament Law this is what the Lord had to say about those that did not have a true word of the Lord or prophesied falsely.

**But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death." You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him."(Deuteronomy 18:20-22)**

and

**"If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you." (Deuteronomy 13:1-5)**

If you notice here, the Lord makes a clear distinction between those that are leading God's people away from him and those that just simply spoke presumptuously. Those that were leading God's people into idolatry, rebellion and apostasy were judged harshly with the penalty of death, those that just "missed it" however were not punished. The Lord told his people not to be afraid of those that were not intentionally leading others into idolatry and

away from the Lord. Since prophets that gave a wrong prophecy under the law were not punished, how much more will New Testament prophets be forgiven under grace? When true repentance takes place, God is more than willing to forgive and we should be too.

We also learn from these passages that a false prophet is someone who speaks in the name of others gods and through their prophecies lead God's people away from him through things like idolatry and sexual immorality. A New Testament example of this would be the false prophetess, whom Jesus called Jezebel, in the Church of Thyatira. (Revelation 2: 20-24) We learn that this is still a very serious offense even under the New Testament that will still be punished by the Lord. Of course his goal is always to bring people to repentance. There will be more to learn about this story later on in this teaching.

Another important fact to note is that false prophets can prophecy *and that prophecy can come to pass*. According to the Bible there are lying signs and wonders. Just because someone that claims to be a prophet and prophesies something and it comes to pass does not automatically mean that it came from the Lord. We are admonished in the Word to judge prophecy and try the spirit behind the prophecy as well. (I Corinthians 14:29, I John 4:1) Also a false prophet that has infiltrated the Church will most likely not blatantly prophesy in the name of other gods. Many prophesy in the name of the Lord \*because either they are deceived or want to deceive others. Jesus warned of such false prophets in Matthew 7: 21-23

**"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"**

The Lord already told us that there would be many false prophets (also false Christs, apostles, teachers...) so why are we so surprised by the fact that they do exist? Not only did the Lord forewarn his people, so did the Apostles through the divinely inspired scriptures. (Matthew 7:15-20, 24:11, I Timothy 4:1-3, II Peter 2:1, II Corinthians 11:13, Revelation 2:2) The Lord wants us to do is to be able to discern and reject the false ones and to recognize and accept the true. He taught that we could recognize a false prophet by the fruit that they produce. Jesus said:

**"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."**

A false prophet will bear bad fruit and teach things that will lead the saints away from the Lord but a true prophet will bear good fruit and prophesy accurately on a consistent basis albeit but not be totally error free or perfect. To judge whether someone is a true or false prophet then, we must look at the overall fruit in their lives and whether it is good or bad.

The Lord has already foretold that on Judgment Day that *many* would claim to have prophesied in his name yet he will tell them to “**depart from me for I never knew you.**” Yes, in Old Testament Israel and even in the New Testament Church, there has been and will continue to be those who claim to speak for the Lord, yet do not have a personal relationship with him. These people that will tell the Lord this will clearly have been deceived. Those that are deceived will also deceive others. Since the Lord said that many prophesied in his name it is vital that we learn the word of God, hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and rely on him for discernment when it come to prophecy. Only those who personally know the Lord can hear him with clarity and be given true authority to speak for him.

#### **4. We should just ignore false prophets.**

Unfortunately this is what many are doing today yet this is the exact opposite of what we should be doing. What we need to do in the Church is to confront false prophets (apostles, pastors, teachers, et cetera), rebuke and correct them in the hopes that they might see the error of their ways. (James 5:19-20, Titus 1:1-14, II Timothy 4:2-4, Galatians 6:1-3) Most people will not even begin to think of changing unless they are confronted with the truth.

Over the years I have seen much damage done when Churches did not deal properly with false prophecy and teaching. It must first and foremost begin with the leadership but all believers should never tolerate or ignore false prophets either, instead we should reject their message or prophetic word when it does not line up with the gospel of Christ. When this is ignored or not dealt with in the right way it will eventually lead others away from Christ and cause their faith to be shipwrecked. This is the ultimate goal of Satan. He too has his ministers that pose as angels of light to serve his evil purposes. The apostle Paul warned believers of such false apostles within the Church and wrote:

**For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. (II Corinthians 11:13-15)**

Since the devil has his false apostles doing damage from within the Church is it a stretch to believe that he will also have false prophets as well? Not only does he have false prophets but *many* false prophets. The apostle John warned the Church concerning these false prophets. He wrote:

**Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (I John 4:1)**

Not everyone who says they are speaking in the name of the Lord is actually doing so. The existence of false prophets is not exclusive to Old Testament Israel as we have learned. We find in the New Testament scriptures that there are also both true and false prophets *within the Church as well*. In this present world the fact is there is light and darkness, good and evil, there is the counterfeit and the genuine. This is precisely why God sent us the Holy Spirit to be our divine helper; we all need to rely on him to learn to distinguish the difference. (I Corinthians 12:10, I John 4:1-6)

The dangers of allowing false prophets and teachers go unchecked and unaccountable in the Church is made evident in the Book of Revelation. In his seven letters to the Churches the Lord rebuked the Church in Thyatira for tolerating a false prophetess that taught immorality causing some in that assembly to go astray. The Lord said:

**“Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.”**

This woman was a false prophetess and used prophecy and teaching to lead others astray. In spite of the damage this woman was doing in the Church, the Lord, in his love and grace, still gave her and her followers time to repent! How much more would the Lord receive repentance from a true prophet that gave one false word unintentionally or presumptuously? God looks on the heart; he sees everything that we don't see, including our motives in whatever we say or do. Of course prophets should come into accountability just as the rest of the ministry should. If we find that we are wrong or missed it, we should be willing to admit our mistakes and ask others to forgive us if we have sinned against them or harmed them in any way. If we have caused division, we should always seek reconciliation as well.

This is why we need to seek the Lord and ask him about what we hear and see. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. In conclusion, a true prophet can prophesy falsely but will overall be bearing good fruit and will teach those things that will draw the saints closer to God. A false prophet however will consistently bear bad or rotten fruit and will teach immorality and idolatry that will lead the saints away from God.

## **5. True Prophet Will Always Be 100% Accurate all the Time**

This statement is similar to saying that a prophet will never miss it. Can a true prophet of the Lord be inaccurate on occasion? Like all believers and even other leaders in the Church, a prophet can get into the flesh or misinterpret a prophetic word of the Lord. Let's face it; no one is perfect, there will be times that all of us may not hear from God as clearly as we would like to. Does this mean that a Prophet should not be held accountable for their prophecies? No. The Bible says that we must judge (weigh carefully) all prophecies and try the spirits to see whether they are of God or not. All leaders in the Church are accountable to God, each other and the saints as well. Prophets should always use wisdom before releasing a word to a local or even the worldwide Church. It is important that one take the time to seek confirmation from the Lord through prayer, study and fasting to help rule out the flesh. At times we can also seek confirmation if necessary through other godly, mature men and women of God as well.

There are some today that believe that a New Testament Prophet should be infallible when it comes to prophecies yet they do not place that same perfection upon other parts of the

ministry. Everyone in the ministry is responsible for the “word” that they give to others in the Church whether through preaching, teaching or prophecy. There are many that preach and teach fallacies yet many tend to overlook this while if a prophet is off the mark they want to label them “false”. Just think, if a pastor is in error over one doctrine, yet his or her other doctrine is biblical sound, would you label them a false pastor?

Those who are genuinely saved and called of God can go off into error through various ways. All of us need to abide continually in Jesus. (John 15) If we don't however, we are in dangerous territory. Paul teaches us through the Book of Galatians that believers and leaders alike can begin in the Spirit but by receiving false or legalistic teaching, wind up in the flesh. (Galatians 3) Both the apostles Paul and Peter prophesied and taught that some would be led astray through the doctrines of demons, false teachings of men, greed, lust and the like. (I Timothy 4:1-3, Titus 1:10-13, II Peter 2: 1-3)

Peter, under the inspiration of the Spirit, declared that there would be false prophets and teachers among the saints of God *also called the Church*. The fact that there are false teachers and prophets in existence within the Church proves that the genuine is also present as well. A careful study of II Peter 2 teaches us that some of these false prophets and teachers that the apostle speaks of here had truly been saved but were led off into error, so much so, that they eventually denied the Lord who bought them with his very own blood!

Anyone that has a divine call is also called to live a holy and consecrated life unto God. It is up to the individual minister or believer how we live our lives before the Lord. According to the word of God we will all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ to answer for and receive what is due to us for those things that we have done in the body whether good or bad. (II Corinthians 5:9-10) We are all admonished in the word also to be careful how we build upon the foundation of Christ because our work will be tried in the fire on that Day as well. If what we build survives this divine fire, we will be rewarded for it but if we build burns up, we will suffer loss yet still be saved. (I Corinthians 3:12-15)

It is possible for a prophet to be led astray by idolatry, greed, lust or simply to be distracted by the cares of this world just as any other minister. Unfortunately in these last days we have seen far too many leaders in the Church fall in the traps of the devil by sinning in various ways and many have been exposed as a result. What is our personal responsibility? Well we should pray for those that have gone astray and whenever possible help to bring them back and restore them to the Lord but we should also watch ourselves because we may find ourselves being tempted in like manner as well. (James 5:19-20, Galatians 6:1-5)

Also it is written in the Bible that in the last days there would be not a famine of the word but a famine of the *hearing* of the word. The Lord has admonished the entire Church to “have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.” We should all ask God for an ear to hear and endeavor to listen, especially those that are leaders. We must also allow room for mistakes. If we have unrealistic expectations of people we will always wind up disappointed. It seems that when it comes to the leadership in the Church the prophet is usually held up to a higher scrutiny and measuring standard than the other parts of the ministry. Just think, if an evangelist, pastor or teacher missed the mark with their preaching

or teaching, would they be scrutinized as closely? Most often they are not, yet they may miss the mark as well.

We are all growing in grace and knowledge and people can make mistakes because they are human. A true prophet could speak presumptuously. If prophets were infallible men (which they are not) then why would the Lord teach us in his word to judge their prophecies? (I Corinthians 14: 29) All men are fallible, only God is infallible. A perfect God does however, work through weak, imperfect men and in so doing, brings glory to himself. God does not need perfect vessels in order to work he only needs yielded vessels. The Apostle Paul wrote these powerful words and it is a reminder of how imperfect we really are.

One of the most notable things that a prophet or prophetess does is prophesy or speak forth the word of the Lord. They are able to do this not only because they have a personal relationship with the Lord but also because of the gifting or anointing imparted to them by the Spirit. It's so important however, that when the Lord is restoring to us that which we have lost that we temper our zeal for the things of God with his knowledge as well.

Unfortunately, some in their zealousness to run with the prophetic ministry are not doing that. A lot of people (ministry included) in these last days have made the dangerous mistake of only "hearing" from God but have not actually taken the time to prove whether what they are hearing actually lines up with God's Word.

Although it is important to both hear from the Spirit and study the Word of God, if we do not verify what we are hearing and reading by what Christ has said, we are in danger of being seduced by demons or can be led off into error by our own flesh. All false teaching that exists today is due to deception. We can only truly know that we've heard from God when it lines up with his divinely inspired word and understanding is imparted by his Spirit. If it comes from any other source other than God then it becomes false teaching. It is our goal in this teaching to bring believers and ministry alike a balanced approach to the prophetic ministry through solid, biblical teaching.

Unfortunately there are some today that masquerade as Prophets declaring that they have a word from the Lord yet what they are teaching and saying is going contrary to the Christ and his gospel. Flaky teachings and blatant greed for notoriety and money have turned many off from any type of prophetic ministry or has brought confusion yet this does not negate the genuine gifting of the Prophet to the body of Christ.

True prophetic ministry that is motivated by the Spirit is a true blessing from God. The Lord has given his prophets the divine ability to see and hear what others may not and this is his gift to us, his body. When the Spirit wills, prophets are given the ability to see us through the eyes of God and speak forth his divine will, plans and purposes into our lives. Through the prophetic ministry we can be encouraged, edified and receive direction at key moments in our lives.

We may receive hope through the prophetic word of the Lord, correction that will help us to grow into maturity in Christ, direction to guide our steps, and receive confirmation from the Lord about our gifts and callings from the Lord. When we receive the ministry of the

prophet, we are really receiving the Lord himself and those things that he desires to impart to us in our personal lives and in the Church collectively. If we want to totally embrace all of Jesus, this includes embracing and receiving His servants *or* prophets as well.