

# Truth and Spirit Ministries

## No Prophets Today ?

By Terry & Denise Bostic

There have been debates among various denominations concerning whether or not there are **prophets** of God today. According to the New Testament scriptures though, this question is not up for debate. The scriptures prove that the ministry gift of the prophet was *divinely* placed within the Body of Christ from the inception of the Church and continues as a necessary part throughout the New Testament age, right up to the time of the coming of the Lord. (*Luke 11:49, I Corinthians 14:29-32, Ephesians 2:20, 3:5, 4:11, Revelation 18:20*) Prophets are ordained of the Lord to stand along side the apostle, pastor, evangelist and teacher as one of the ministry offices within the Church. (*Ephesians 4:11*) Since the scripture states that the Lord gave these ministry gifts unto men, we need to accept and receive what God has ordained.

There are mixed beliefs in the Church today regarding prophets:

- 1.) There are some that believe that there are New Testament prophets and are receiving the blessings and benefits of this ministry gift.
- 2.) There are some who may be totally unaware that there are New Testament prophets in the Church today due to lack of knowledge or non-exposure to this ministry gift.
- 3.) There are some who are confused and fearful of prophetic ministry because they have had “bad” experiences due to receiving a false prophecy, or being ministered to by the immature, inexperienced or untrained.
- 4.) Then there are those who reject the ministry gift of prophets today due to the false teaching and traditions of men.

Church leaders that are rejecting the ministry of the prophet are not only doing a great disservice to their ministries but also to their congregations by not making room for this particular gifting to be the blessing that the Lord intended it to be to the Body of Christ. We must believe God rather than men. We must choose the Word of God over the doctrines of men.

The ministries of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher are to help believers grow into spiritual maturity in Christ and to also equip them for works of service. (*Ephesians 4:11-12*) The prophet’s responsibility is to teach and train the Body of Christ about the *prophetic* ministry. When local Churches are properly educated about the prophetic ministry, members can have less “bad” experiences and more blessed ones. When the ministry of the prophet is received in the local Church, believers can experience this divine gifting firsthand as the prophet models this ministry. Church leaders and believers can also acquire the knowledge of how to receive the prophetic word, learn how to hear the voice of God and operate in the prophetic gifts personally.

When the prophet is welcomed and embraced, those who have a prophetic call within the congregation can learn and grow in maturity in their prophetic gifting and minister with greater effectiveness to the Body of Christ.

We should not reject the prophetic gifts of God because we don’t want to take the time and patience to help young prophetic ministers “grow up” in these gifts. Believers should receive all of the ministry gifts that Jesus has so wisely placed within the Church, including that of the *prophet*. (*Luke 11:49*)

## God Still Speaks Today

Many reject the necessity of prophets and the gift of prophecy today for various reasons. Some erroneously believe and teach that since we have the written word, the Bible, that God no longer needs to personally speak to or through people any more. They believe that the Bible is the sum total of everything that God *has said* and *will ever say* to man upon the earth today, however, this goes against what is revealed in the scriptures about God and His ways. Whatever we believe or teach must line up with what the Lord says in His Word and that which stays true to His nature and character. The Word tells us that there are prophets in the New Testament Church and that *the Lord* placed them there for a divine purpose.

We must realize that 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)

God still speaks *to* people and *through* people today and this is not surprising. According to the Bible, God has always spoken His personal word *to* humanity since the beginning of the creation of man and throughout the ages. He has also chosen to speak *through* humanity i.e., His chosen vessels, including prophets. To say that God does not personally speak today or that the *only* way that He speaks is through the written word goes against God's track record as revealed throughout the entire Bible. God is a Spirit and He speaks to the spirit of man. (John 4:24, 14:25-26)

God *speaks*. God the Father *spoke* personally and said, **"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."** And, **"This is my Son, listen to Him!"** (Matthew 3:17, Mark 9:7) God's Son, Jesus Christ is personified as the *Living Word* or *Logos* and He came to earth as God in the flesh to speak *personally* to His creation. (John 1:1-14) The resurrected Christ appeared and spoke to many, including His ministers and brethren. (John 21:1-25, Acts 1:3, 10:9-20, 18:9-11) The Holy Spirit speaks also and Jesus specifically said that the Spirit would *speak* the Lord's words to His followers. Jesus said, **"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."** (John 16:12-13)

Jesus gave this promise to His followers. This promise is for you and I today as well because we are His followers too. We must remember that God is not a respecter of persons, if He spoke to those historical figures of the Bible, He will speak to us today as well. (Acts 10:34) Our personal fellowship is with God and one another. (I John 1:3,7)

Unfortunately, there will always be certain people that will only believe what they want to believe regardless of what is written in the word. Ironically some neglect to receive the same written word that they claim to uphold or try to explain it away with the ideologies of men. Of course we need God's written word but we should not add to it or take away from it either by rejecting parts of it or making it into something that God never intended. We must rely on the Holy Spirit to impart spiritual understanding to us from the mind of God. (I Corinthians 2:9-13)

We must remember that the written word is only ink on paper until the Spirit of God breathes life into it and *speaks to our spirits*, bringing the revelation or understanding of what God intends for us to have regarding that word or passage of scripture. The Holy Spirit has a *voice* and *speaks* the word of God to us. (John 16:12-13) This is why it says in the Bible that the word is *living* and active. (Hebrews 3:7-8, 4:7, 12) The Holy Spirit brings life to the Word. God is a *personal* God and desires to have personal relationships with His people. Sadly, some do not have this

because they have relegated the person of Jesus to be a historical figure of the past but do not comprehend and receive the *Living One* today who has already been resurrected in glory and power and presently sits at the right hand of the Father. (*Revelation 1:17-18, Acts 7:55-56*) God is not in a time warp and His word is not confined or limited to a certain time period but He speaks perpetually. (*Hebrews 3:7*)

### God Continues To Speak Through His Prophets

We find in the New Testament scriptures that prophets and prophecy were vital to the early Church. We know that God does nothing in vain. He evidently deemed these gifts as being necessary for the Body of Christ under the age of *grace*. God works through people. Prophets have a purpose and that purpose is to be God's *mouthpiece* or *spokesperson* to others. Through the ministry of the prophet God can bring encouragement, exhortation, edification, confirmation and revelation to His people. There are many more facets to the ministry of the prophet than just prophesying and we will teach more specifically about these in future articles.

Some feel that God cannot speak through people today because they are fallible or make mistakes. They put biblical figures on a super spiritual pedestal as being the only ones worthy of such a thing. The people in the Bible were just as human as you and I; they sinned and made mistakes as well. God does not work through perfect people because *they don't exist*. Instead, He works through imperfect men and women so that no flesh can glory in His presence and that men might be confounded with the wisdom of God. (*I Corinthians 1:26-31*)

Others fear that someone claiming to speak in the name of the Lord will give them a *false prophecy* and lead them astray. We do not have to live in fear because God has given us safeguards that we might know if something is from Him or not. We must test the spirits to see whether they are of God. (*I John 4:1-6*) The Holy Spirit can expose false prophets and false prophecy to us. We need to accept that which is of God and reject that which is not. We need to place our trust in a perfect God and not imperfect man.

Briefly, we can give two of the ways that we can know if a prophecy is from God or not. One way we can know that one is speaking by the Spirit of God is that it will always be in agreement with God's written word, the Bible. Another also given us His Holy Spirit to help us to discern truth from error and discern between the spirits in order to know if something is of God or not. (*I Corinthians 12:10, John 14:16-17,25-26, I John 4:1-6*) These are only some of the important keys that will help us to judge prophecy. (We will teach more in depth on how to judge prophecy in a future article.)

In times past and even today many ministers have taught believers that the ministry gift of the prophet has been done away with or is no longer needed in the Church. "*There are no prophets today,*" they say and attempt to explain this statement away with the doctrines of men. Those who promote such fallacies need to awaken to the fact that not only are they coming against the Lord and His will but also are rejecting their fellow co-laborers in the Gospel, a thing that the Lord does not take lightly. It is God's will that all of His ministers work together for the cause of the Gospel of Christ and the Kingdom of God. There are many members within the Body of Christ and each one has different gifts and callings. One part cannot say to another part however, "I don't need you!" because each and every part is absolutely necessary for the Body to function properly. (*I Corinthians 12:12-30*)

### The Apostle And Prophet Connection

We will also refer briefly to the ministry gift of the **apostle** as well, since the offices of apostle and prophet are so often linked together in team ministry in the New Testament scriptures, but also are usually linked together with the "**no longer in existence**" theology of men. (*Luke 11:49, Ephesians 2:20, 3:5, Revelation 18:20*) If God really did do away with the ministry gifts of apostle

and prophet, as some teach, He would have also had to do away with the evangelist, pastor and teacher and we know that He did not because we see these gifts in operation in the Church now. Those that teach such things do not have the authority to make such decisions. Why? *It is because they cannot take away what they did not give in the first place.* We must never usurp the authority of the Head of the Church, but remain under it. (*Ephesians 4:15, 5:23*) Only the Lord Jesus Christ has given these gifts and only He has the power and authority to take them away and we do not find it recorded in the New Testament that He has ever done so.

### **Jesus, The Gift Giver**

It is recorded in the Book of Ephesians that Jesus Himself gave these ministerial gifts unto men. What are they? **“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers... For what purpose were they given? For the perfecting (maturing) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”** (*Ephesians 4: 11-12*) Note that these gifts were given to the Body of Christ in the New Testament!

Although there are other offices or ministry gifts within the body of Christ listed in the New Testament, we are only specifically addressing what many call the *five-fold ministry gifts* or the *five ascension gifts* in this article. These particular ministries are given by God's grace and according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (***Ephesians 4:7***) These gifts come from Christ Himself, as He is our Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher. (*Hebrews 3:1, Luke 24:19, Hebrews 2:10, Matthew 4:17, I Peter 5:4, John 3:2*)

The ministry gifts listed in *Ephesians 4:11* are given to those specifically called and chosen of the Lord and they are given the divine empowerment and ability by grace to carry out these ministerial functions. Since all of these ministries were given as a whole to help mature and build up the *New Testament Church*, then if one discards the office of apostle and prophet, they must also do away with the evangelist, pastor and teacher as well since they are listed together, as a complementary ministry *team* to benefit the whole Church.

For how long are these gifts given? **“Till we all (the Church) come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ...”** (*Ephesians 4: 13-15*)

According to this word, we can truthfully say that we haven't arrived at this point yet! The Church of Jesus Christ is still being built and will not be a completed spiritual temple until all the living stones (believers) have been built into it. (*Matthew 16:18, Acts 15:16, Ephesians 2:19-22, I Peter 2:5, Hebrews 3:6*) We have not yet attained the measure of the fullness of Christ. We have not yet attained unity in the faith as attested to by the many denominational divisions and belief differences today. Unity in the Body of Christ can only come by the Spirit and it is only when believers come into unity and agreement *with the Spirit* that we will have unity in the faith.

Ministers that believe and teach that there are no apostles and prophets today have no problem saying that they have the title of an evangelist, pastor or teacher, so evidently they believe that these ministry gifts are for the Church at present. One could only come to the conclusion that they believe that there are only *three* ministry gifts instead of all *five* given to the Church that will help bring the Body of Christ into maturity! According to the Lord however, He has ordained that not only these five ministries work together to bring the Church into maturity, but some leaders also need to have the understanding that it also takes every saint (joint) to supply (minister) in the capacity that the Lord wills and that *we all* have a part in building up the body of Christ (or temple of God) together. In the New Testament, all believers are now made priests unto God. (***\*Ephesians 4:16, I Peter 2:9-10, Revelation 1:5-6***)

It was the Lord's intent, purpose and will from the very beginning and even now that all ministries work together for the sake of the Church and the Kingdom of God as a whole. Churches and ministers that have not been receiving and promoting these other ministries need to start accepting the other parts of ministry that the Lord has placed alongside them in order for the Church to be edified and mature and fulfill the Great Commission that the Lord has given the Church.

### **One Man Ministry Unbalanced**

In most Churches today we find mostly a one-man ministry and that is usually the ministry of the *pastor*. Oftentimes the pastor is required to be all things to all people in order to be the spiritual leader of the congregation. Not only is it impossible for one ministerial gifting to bring the Church into spiritual maturity but also it is a very unbalanced approach to ministry and is not spiritually healthy for the Body of Christ. Needless to say, this is also putting too much pressure and responsibility upon one person to try and fill the absent roles of all the other ministries that the Lord has given to balance out the leadership to His people. In short, having only one person in leadership in the local Church goes contrary to New Testament doctrine and practice.

God, in His wisdom has ordained these five ministry gifts to work together and be accountable to one another for the sake of the Church and the Kingdom of God. Having plurality in leadership *and authority* helps to provide a system of checks and balances in order to prevent the infection of false teaching, spiritual abuses, religious pyramids and hierarchies that might endanger or harm the Lord's sheep. The Lord Jesus gave five ministerial gifts to help bring the Church into maturity, not just one. (*Ephesians 4:10-13*)

The pastor may not have the gifting and anointing of the prophet, the apostle, evangelist or teacher and therefore unable to supply *by the Spirit* what only these ministries can produce and administer because of God-given ability and grace. (*1 Corinthians 12:27-30, Ephesians 4:16*) Although there are pastors from certain streams of the Church that do invite and receive prophets into their congregations, there are still many pastors that believe and teach their members that there are no apostles and prophets today. The office of the pastor in most cases has taken the pre-eminence above the other four ministries in leadership and authority, which goes contrary to the will of God.

The five ministries listed in *Ephesians 4:11* are to be subject to one another and working together as a team to bless and benefit the Body of Christ. Ironically, the New Testament has much more to say about the ministry of the prophet and those things related to prophecy than the ministry of the pastor, which should teach us how vital the ministry of the prophet is to the Church.

It is not our intention to demean the ministry of the pastor in any way, but to teach the Body of Christ, both ministers and believers alike, the importance and necessity of not only the ministry of the prophet, but of all the God-given ministries. Pastors and other leaders need to accept and receive the ministry of prophets, invite them to come along side them and to work shoulder to shoulder as co-laborers with Christ. It is crucial for pastors and prophets to work in mutual cooperation in order to fulfill the will of God. The saints of God deserve to benefit from all of these ministries in order to grow in grace, knowledge and maturity. We want to speak the truth in love to help enable the Church to grow up in Christ and in all things that He has given us. (*Ephesians 4:15*) Believers in local Churches cannot mature as God intends if they are not receiving of the divine anointing of *all* the God-given ministries.

### **Love and Acceptance**

It is the will of God that all the different ministries in the Body of Christ submit to one another and work together in unity and harmony for the overall benefit of the Church and the Kingdom of God. We cannot be the powerful and effective Church that the Lord wants us to be until we are receiving one another in the spirit of love and acceptance. We can only truly function properly as

ONE Body, unified with our Head, which is Christ, when we are receiving and walking in His divine will, plans and purposes.

When we reject one another's gifting and callings due to false teaching and the doctrines of men, we grieve and quench the Spirit of God and limit the Holy One from fully operating through His people, as He desires to. Our faith will be strong when we walk in love because faith works by love. (*Galatians 5:6*) We should obey and practice the Lord's command to love one another. (*John 15:17*) Love never fails. (*I Corinthians 13:1-8*)

We should not receive the false teaching and doctrines of men that go contrary to what God has said and we should not give place to the devil or allow his lies to divide and weaken us as the Body of Christ. We must have the wisdom and fear of the Lord instead. (*Proverbs 9:10*) It is wisdom to receive all that the Lord has given to empower the Church of the New Testament. We must fear God more than men and receive what He says over the teachings of men. We must not aid the cause of our enemy, Satan, but instead aid the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom by receiving and walking in the truth.

The devil loves it when people reject the prophets of the Lord. The prophetic ministry is a vital part of the Church and can be very damaging to the powers of darkness. If we receive the various gifts that come through the prophet, the Church will greatly benefit from knowing what is coming in the future. This helps to foil the plans of the enemy and bring greater victory to God's people. This helps the Church be prepared by God for the *unknown*.

Also, if we receive the plans and purposes of God through the visions and revelation knowledge given to the prophets, we can have insight into the future plans and purposes of God, move in the direction that God desires us to and this will help us to carry out His divine will. These are only a few of the many blessings that flow through the prophet's ministry that we need to understand. We all need to receive this very essential and valuable gift to the Body of Christ! When we believe in His messengers, the prophets, we will be greatly blessed as well as receive a prophet's reward. (*II Chronicles 20:20, Matthew 10:41*)