

New Testament Prophets Part I

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If you could take a poll within the entire Body of Christ today and ask them if they believed that there were prophets in the Old Testament, everyone would certainly vote a resounding yes. But if you would ask the same question about whether they believe that there are New Testament prophets today, you would most likely get entirely different results. Through false teaching and unbelief, there are many today that do not understand that the Lord Jesus placed prophets within the *Church* for a divine purpose and as a result are missing out on the wonderful benefits of this God given ministry. It is God's will for the Church to receive all five of these ministry gifts to help the saints to grow in maturity and be prepared for works of ministry. (*Ephesians 4:11-12*)

Our purpose in making this prophetic series available to those in the Body of Christ is to educate believers about the different aspects of prophetic ministry so that they can begin to accept by faith and receive the spiritual benefits that God intends them to have through the ministry of the prophet and prophetic people and to also to have the ability to move in the gift of prophecy as the Spirit wills. (*1 Corinthians 12:10-11*) The prophetic ministry can be a tremendous blessing when properly executed but at the same token can be problematic when immaturity and ignorance flourishes among both Church leaders and brethren.

Within the Body of Christ there have been varying experiences among the saints regarding prophetic ministry such as:

- 1.) Some have not yet encountered or experienced the ministry of the prophet or prophetic people because of non-exposure.
- 2.) Some may have had encounters with the prophetic ministry but may have experienced confusion or fear as a result because of lack of knowledge about this particular gifting.
- 3.) Some have had bad experiences because they have been "ministered" or "prophesied" to by the inexperienced, the immature or people moving out of another spirit instead of the Holy Spirit and so tend to reject this type ministry.
- 4.) Lastly some have been blessed, edified, encouraged and received the confirmation and direction of the Lord through prophetic ministry during key moment of their lives.

Of course it is the latter that is the type prophetic ministry that is consistent with the will of God and beneficial for all believers.

The Prophet, A Ministry Gift To The Church

The Lord has given the five distinct ministry gifts of the apostle, *prophet*, evangelist, pastor and teacher to the Church. (*Ephesians 4:11*) Each of these ministries has been given the charge and responsibility by the Lord to work together as a ministry *team* to help the saints become spiritually mature. They have also been given the divine grace and ability to teach, train and prepare the saints to do works of service for God, in whatever capacity that He has called each of them to serve Him. (*Ephesians 4:12-13, 1 Corinthians 12:11,18*) These five ministries are not called to just operate in their own ministries exclusively but are called to impart their particular spiritual gifting and anointing to the Body of Christ thereby bringing divine *multiplication* of the gifts of God among the saints. (*Romans 1:11*) These were all given to build up the *New Testament Church* and these ministries must continue doing what God has ordained each of them to do "**until we all reach unity in the faith, in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**" (*Ephesians 4:11-13*)

The ministry gift of **the prophet** was set into the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ and is *one part* of this five-ministry team. The prophet does more than prophesy to the Body of Christ. Prophets are *ordained ministers* of Christ and are preachers and/or teachers of God's Word. Prophets also train the saints in prophetic ministry so that there may be a multiplication of these gifts within the Body of Christ. They model ministry by moving in the demonstration of the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. They also teach believers how to hear from God and operate in the prophetic gifts. Before we teach more on the office of the prophet, we want to give scriptural examples of New Testament prophets. We want to begin with the life of the greatest Prophet of all, Jesus.

Jesus, The Prophet

Many Christians today know Jesus as their Shepherd or Pastor, but did you know that Jesus is your Prophet as well? According to the life of Jesus and the Holy Scriptures Jesus is Priest, Prophet and King. (*Hebrews 7:17-28, Luke 24:19, Matthew 2:2, 21:5*) He is the only man that walked the earth that has held and continues to hold all of these titles. Not only is Jesus Priest and King, He is also our Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher. (*Hebrews 3:1, Luke 24:19, Hebrews 2:10, Matthew 4:17, 1 Peter 5:4, John 3:2*) This is a very important fact to know. Why? It is because if we want to embrace Jesus, we need to embrace the totality of all that He is, not just the parts that we choose to.

If we want to totally embrace all of Jesus, this includes embracing and receiving His servants or prophets as well. Did you know that the ministry gifts that Jesus gave to men have come from His Person, including that of the prophet? He gave from *Himself* these five ministry gifts listed in *Ephesians 4:11*. These are in essence the parts of Jesus' very nature, anointing and ministry that He possessed and walked in while on the earth and that He has given as His personal gifts to His Church to have in the New Testament.

These divine gifts have been supernaturally imparted so that Jesus could continue His work and ministry among men after His departure to heaven. Jesus is the Head of the Church and we are His Body. In truth, the Lord and His people are one! When Jesus sends out His servants in the power of the Spirit, it is the same as if Jesus is going Himself. How intimately close we are connected with Jesus because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and His anointing- we are in Him and He is in us! If we can receive a greater revelation of this astounding truth, we would all treat one another with greater acceptance, love, honor and respect in the Body of Christ.

The word atonement means "at one with God". It is because of the sacrificial atonement that Jesus made on the cross that we are now made one with God. Because of this powerful truth of being one with the Lord, this means that we not only share in His triumph, but His persecution as well. This is why Jesus told His disciples, "**No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.**" (*John 15:20-21*) To reject and persecute anyone of these five ministry gifts is to reject and persecute Jesus! Why do people do this? Jesus taught that it is because they do not really know the Father or His will.

At the other end of the spectrum is that when we receive anyone of these ministry gifts or servants of Christ is to be *divinely* blessed and is the same as receiving Jesus and the Father! Jesus told His disciples, "**He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward...**" (*Matthew 10:40-41*) These words that Jesus spoke concerning prophets was not just about prophets in the Old Testament. Just think about this, at the time that Jesus spoke this, the Old Testament Law was getting ready to be fulfilled and come to an end by His death, burial and resurrection. This was mostly pointing to those prophets that would be ministering under the New Covenant. This coincides with Jesus' words in Luke 11:49, which speaks of those prophets that would be sent forth under the dispensation of New Testament grace. More proof of this will be given shortly.

Jesus dwells within believers. (*John 14:20, John 15:4*) We must know that when Jesus sends us, He is also *going* with us. We go in His name, with the power and authority that He has delegated to us. When the Lord sends forth His *servants or ministers*, He is going with them. Prophets too are sent forth with power and authority by the Lord to speak and minister in His name!

Prophets Are Sent Forth By The Lord

Not only has the Lord giving the ministry gift of the prophet to the Church, He also said that He would send them forth personally. **“Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.” (Luke 11:49)** Jesus said that His apostles and prophets would be killed and persecuted. This is speaking of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. How do we know this? We do not find these two ministries joined together until after the New Covenant was instituted. (*1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 2:20, 3:5, 4:11, 18:20*)

There were no apostles mentioned in the Old Testament, the office of the apostle is exclusively a New Testament ministry. These words that Jesus spoke began to come to pass after His resurrection as many of His followers and ministers, including apostles and prophets, were persecuted by others and martyred. We know that the ministry gifts of apostle and prophet were in operation at the inception of the Church but also they will continue to be in operation throughout the whole dispensation of grace and until the coming of the Lord. (*Revelation 10:7, 11:18, 16:6, 18:20, 24*)

New Testament Prophets By Name

“It was he who gave some to be...prophets.” (Ephesians 4:11) Prophets stand in the divine counsel of God and are interpreters of His divine will and purpose. They receive what is from God’s heart and mind and release it to others through the gifts of *preaching, teaching* and *prophesying*. Prophets also have the supernatural gifting and ability given by the Holy Spirit to see and predict future events and warn of things to come. As we learn more about the ministry of the prophet, we can come to realize how valuable this gifting can be to the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God on earth and also how dangerous it can be to the powers of hell.

We can gain much understanding of the purposes and functions of the ministry of prophets as we study the New Testament scriptures. In the Book of Acts it says, **“And in these days came prophets down from Jerusalem unto Antioch.”** One prophet is mentioned by name specifically. **“And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth (famine) throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. (Acts 11:27-28)**

God sent the Prophet Agabus to Antioch with a divine message. This word from the Lord had a *purpose*. What was that purpose? This prophetic word was given to prepare the Church in advance for a severe famine that was coming. In this passage we can learn about the mind and heart of God and also about how God chose to reveal this knowledge. God warned and prepared the Church through the ministry of a prophet.

It is important to note how the Church responded to this prophecy. What did they do in response to this word of the Lord? **“Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.” Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabus and Saul. (The Apostle Paul) (Acts 11:29-30)**

The leaders and believers in the Church at Antioch moved by faith! They had received this word as coming from God and moved in accordance with it by not only *believing* it but by *acting* upon it as well. This is a very important lesson for us in the Church today. If we receive God’s prophets and the word that they declare, we can receive vital information from God that will prepare us for

the unexpected and what we cannot yet see coming. We, too, must receive prophetic words by faith and action as well. We will teach more on this particular subject later.

It is stated specifically that this word came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. This is very important also. This proves that this word was from the Lord. It came to pass just as the prophet prophesied. This is how we know that a prophecy is from God. A word from God will come to pass just as was spoken. There are other important factors in weighing and judging prophecy, which will be given in another teaching.

Two other New Testament prophets were named as well in the Book of Acts. We find these prophets to be a very important part of *carrying* and *confirming* a divine message to other parts of the Church. In Acts chapter fifteen, the Jerusalem Council reached a decision about the new Gentile converts through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the words of the Old Testament prophets. To spread and confirm the decision of the Council, the apostles at Jerusalem sent two men with Barnabas and Paul to Antioch. **“It seemed good unto us, being assembled in one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things *by mouth*.”** The scripture states the leadership position of these two men within the ministry. **“And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words and confirmed them.”** (Acts 15:25-27, 32)

The Apostles at Jerusalem sent two Prophets. Why? It is because prophets bring *confirmation* of God's Word. The apostles recognized the ministry and authority of the prophets. They also understood that prophets are God's voice or *mouth* to the Body of Christ. Another thing learned here about the ministry of prophets is that they give *exhortation* (or strong advice) to the Church as well.

Judas and Silas were two prophets chosen to spread this word, bring confirmation by word of mouth and strongly advise the Church to receive this Word from God. It is significant to note that these were tested and tried men, proven to be trustworthy and faithful to the Lord and His work. Their being chosen was not based upon *popularity*, but upon their track record of being yielded, faithful vessels and that they had willingly suffered persecution for His name's sake. They were men who had given themselves over entirely to Jesus and His cause!

The Functions Of New Testament Prophets

Some of the things that we had just mentioned are just some of the multifaceted gifting of the ministry of prophets. We can glean even more about the function and operation of prophets through examples given in the New Testament. There were other prophets mentioned in the New Testament, although not by name. This is very important for us to know. The fact that there were prophets other than those mentioned by name shows us that this ministry gift was not just for a select few. There were many prophets to help minister to the new and growing Church. Clearly, there were many prophets sent out to minister in the early days of the Church. **“And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.”** (Acts 11:27) These prophets were from Jerusalem and went to Antioch for a divine purpose.

It was also recorded that there were prophets in the Church at Antioch. **“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers...”** (Acts 13:1) This particular scripture even gives these prophets and teachers names. **“...As Barnabas, and Simeon that was Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”** We can learn much from this particular passage about some of the functions of prophets under the dispensation of grace.

While these ministers were fasting and praying before the Lord, the Holy Spirit gave them a word. He said, **“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”** This

shows us the unity among these ministries, their mutual cooperation with one another and the will of God. This team of ministries made up a *prophetic presbytery* that released the will of God by the prophetic word and the laying on of hands. (*1 Timothy 4:14 KJV*) The Church at Antioch set a great example about how ministries are supposed to work together for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. Let's find out what happened next. **“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed...”** (*Acts 13:2-3*)

The Holy Spirit spoke the will of God concerning the apostolic work given to Paul and Barnabas. These words were confirmed through the mouths of prophets that were present that day. With that confirming word, there was also a divine *release* given with the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands is a doctrine of the Church. (*Hebrews 6:1-2*) So we can understand that through the ministry of prophets come confirmation of the *word* and a releasing of the *will* of God by that word. Prophets confirm the specific callings of God's ministers.

We can learn another very important lesson from this passage in *Acts 13:1-4*. It is God that sends out His ministers, not men. Men can only confirm the spoken (or *rhema*) Word of God and come into agreement with His will by speaking it forth and by the laying on of hands, which brings us to an imperative truth. This is *exactly* what we need the prophetic ministry for. This was what we call a *now* word from God. This was not anything that could be given to man through the written word; *it had to come directly from God by word of mouth*. (The written word for the Church in the first century was the Old Testament scriptures.) This is a great example of why God, at times, must speak personally to and through His people. He may need to reveal His divine will, give us *direction* and *instruction* for our personal lives and ministries and this cannot be found in the written word. This too, is part of the ministry of the prophet to the Body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul taught the Church regarding the ministry of prophets. In *1 Corinthians 12:28-29*, Paul lists the prophets as one of the various ministry gifts that God has set within the Church. He makes it clear that although all of these gifts come from God that they differ in their assignments or duties. Whatever offices God gives us in the Body of Christ, He will give us the grace and faith to exercise these gifts. (*Romans 12:4-8*)

There is more to learn from Paul's letter to the Corinthians about the ministry of prophets. In *1 Corinthians 14*, we find Paul's instructions to the Church regarding orderly worship and the exercising of spiritual gifts. Included within these instructions is the proper *protocol* for the prophets in exercising their prophetic gifts, which we can go by today as well.

“Let the prophets speak, two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” (*1 Corinthians 14:29-33*)

There are several things that we can learn in this passage that can help us today. Here we find that prophets were present among the Body of Christ and were permitted to speak as long as they were orderly, prophesying one at a time so as to not cause confusion. The fact that Paul addressed prophets (plural) teaches us that prophets were a *well-known* and *accepted* ministry that was present and active within the local Church. Another thing that is made evident by this scripture is that prophets receive *revelation* knowledge for the Church. There also may be more than one prophet present that has a revelation, teaching or something that may bring comfort to the Church.

Not only do prophets receive revelation knowledge for the Church, but may teach as well. We had mentioned earlier that prophets not only prophesy, but are preachers and teachers of the word as well. They receive and impart *revelation knowledge* of the Word of God to the saints. It is also stated in this passage of scripture that prophecy is to be *judged*, which is absolutely essential for

all to know. We must weigh prophecy and judge by the Spirit and the Word if it is *credible* and of *God*. These instructions of Paul are for the Church today also as they were given for our learning and as guidelines to follow.

“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” We all need to subject ourselves to one another for the sake of unity and orderliness in the Church so that everyone may benefit from what is being said. When one has a prophecy, revelation, exhortation or comforting word to give, they can hold onto that word in their spirits to give at the proper timing. We should always subject our spirits first and foremost to the Holy Spirit and He will orchestrate the right time for prophets or those operating in the gift of prophecy to release that word to the Body of Christ. We must always avoid confusion, talking over top of one another and make sure that everyone is given the opportunity to release what he or she has been given by God to the Body, one at a time. Love is patient and not rude. When we walk in love towards one another, we will exercise patience and common courtesy. The exercising of spiritual gifts are nothing or will not truly benefit others without love. (*I Corinthians 13*)

Apostles And Prophets Are Foundation Laying Ministries

The Church is a spiritual temple. Jesus Christ is the Foundation of this spiritual temple and we, God's people, are the living stones that are being built upon this Foundation. (*I Corinthians 2:11, I Peter 2:4-10*) Apostles and prophets help to lay that foundation of Christ for the people of God. Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” (*Ephesians 2:19-22*)

We have taught before that the Church is not yet a completed spiritual temple. Through these scriptures and others, we can gain insight into an astounding, *ongoing* work of the building of this great, spiritual temple. Paul told the Ephesians that they were being built into God's spiritual temple back then and of course, so were all the rest of the Churches at that time also. The *finished* spiritual temple of God however will consist of *every believer* in Christ past, present and future. This means that God has included not only all those living stones (believers) down through the ages but He is also including those of us that are His living stones within the Church today as part of His spiritual temple. We are being built into God's spiritual temple today and it will not be finished until every last living stone (believer) has been laid within the building. (*Matthew 16:18, I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, II Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:20-22, Hebrews 3: 6, I Peter 2:5*)

This is very important to understand and is laying a foundation for what we are about to teach. There have been many ministers that have used these scriptures in *Ephesians 2:19-22* to teach others that there are no apostles and prophets today. They have interpreted these scriptures as the foundation being the New Testament scriptures and since these have already been “laid” (the doctrines of the Church) that we no longer need apostles and prophets because their work is finished. This interpretation does not line up with the scriptures though and shows lack of knowledge concerning the building of God's spiritual temple- the Church.

Our foundation is clearly revealed in the scriptures and is none other than *Jesus Christ*. The Apostle Paul gives great insight into the building of God's spiritual temple in *I Corinthians 3:9-16*. Paul begins by telling the Church that they are God's building. (V.9) Then he teaches that by God's grace, *he* (Paul, an apostle) has laid a foundation as a master builder and that *someone else* is building on it. **“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it.”** Then he warns that each one should be careful

how he builds. (V.10) Paul then goes on to reveal what foundation he laid. **“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”** (V. 11)

What is Paul referring to here? He is referring to the building of *Churches*, which are the people or temple of God. Paul was given an apostolic call from God to not only preach the Gospel of Christ, but to establish Churches. As a servant of the Lord, he was God’s fellow worker, as was Apollos. (V. 9) And as *God’s fellow worker*, whenever he established a Church, Paul would always lay down or put down the foundation of Christ first. These profound truths learned from this and other passages teaches us that God uses men to be co-laborers in the building of His temple and that they are to lay the foundation of Christ in the establishment of new Churches. God’s people are still starting new Churches today and the *only foundation* of each and every Church should be Christ alone. New converts must first have the foundation of Christ laid in their lives before they can move on to greater maturity. (*Hebrews 5:11-14. 6:1-3*)

After Paul established a new Church and the foundation was laid, he would ordain new leadership to take over before he left and then they were responsible to build upon that foundation. Paul teaches that men were to be careful how they build upon that foundation. The very fact that Paul warns others to be careful how they build (because their work will be tested with fire) proves that *people* are responsible for how they build after the foundation of Christ is laid. (V.10) Surprisingly, it is not only leadership that builds up a Church, but also all believers are used of God to help “build up” the Church as a spiritual temple. The only way that our work will survive the fire of God’s testing is if we build with the eternal things of the Spirit. (*Zechariah 4:6*)

Proof of this is when Paul taught the Church about the use of spiritual gifts within the local body he wrote, **“How is it then, brethren? When you come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”** (*I Corinthians 14:26*) The words edify, edifying and edification that are mentioned in I Corinthians 14 mean *to be a house-builder, i.e. construct or confirm, build up, edify.* [3618,3619, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*] This is astounding! ***Everyone in the Body of Christ are co-laborers with the Lord, helping Him to build His spiritual temple, the Church.*** We just need to make sure that we are building up God’s temple and not tearing it down! (Think about that one!)

This is absolutely essential for God’s ministers to have knowledge of the building of God’s spiritual temple for the sake of His people. Before we begin to spiritually build our Churches, we need to make sure we have the right foundation. Some Churches today sadly, have not laid Jesus as their foundation. Their foundation may be something else. Their Church may have been founded upon a *man, woman, doctrine, the Old Testament Law or religion*, but this is not the same as Christ. Those things being built upon these foundations will not last because they were not built upon *the Rock.* (*Matthew 7:24-26*) This is why we need God ordained apostles and prophets in the Body of Christ today. According to the scriptures, God has given them the grace and gifting to lay the proper foundation of *Jesus Christ* in Churches. (*I Corinthians 3:9-11, Ephesians 2:19-22*)

The Bible teaches us that not only are apostles to help lay the foundation of Christ in the starting of new Churches being established, but that **prophets** are also ordained of God for this work as well. (*Ephesians 2:20*) Apostles and prophets work together in mutual cooperation as a divinely led ministry team to lay the foundation of Christ before the building begins. The Church has not ceased to have need of the anointing of apostles and prophets today because Churches are still being raised up and need to begin with the proper foundation of Jesus Christ first. To have a greater understanding of why God uses apostles and prophets together to lay the foundation of Christ in the forming of new Churches we can gain greater insight from Paul’s message to the Ephesians.

“Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was give to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by *revelation*, as I have already written briefly.

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my *insight* into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Jesus Christ."

(Ephesians 3:2-6)

We can learn several things from this passage. First, the Spirit of God imparts *revelation knowledge* and *insight* to apostles and prophets so that they may minister the foundational things of Christ to the Church. They are also given revelation knowledge and insight by the Holy Spirit to minister the deeper things of God to the Body of Christ. Revelation knowledge and insight is something that the Church still needs today and this did not "die out" with the apostles and prophets of the first century. We need this just as much, if not more than the Church did in the beginning. The Holy Spirit is still here with us, working among the Church and teaching us the mysteries of God that we need to know. We can only understand these truths by the Holy Spirit revealing them to us by divine revelation and insight. *(1 Corinthians 2:6-16)* God has not stopped the building of His spiritual temple! In Part II of New Testament Prophets, we will go more in depth about the gifting of prophets and their ministry to the Body of Christ.