

## **LESSON 7**

### **. . . NT PROPHETS (PROPHECY)**

#### **THE NEW TESTAMENT PROPHET**

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers..." Acts 13:1

It is essential to understand the difference between the function of the Old Testament and New Testament Prophets, in order to have a proper revelation and understanding of the Ministry of Christ through the Church.

**1. The Office of the Prophet is an Ascension-Gift Ministry set by the Lord in the Church.**

- Ephesians 4:11

**2. God has set in the Church, Apostles first, secondly Prophets.**

- 1 Corinthians 12:28-29

**3. There is no record that Jesus Christ ever chose a single Prophet before His Crucifixion and Ascension.**

**4. The Ministry of the Prophet was given for the perfecting of the saints until such a time we come into unity unto a "perfect man".**

- Ephesians 4:13

**5. The Church is built upon the foundation laid by the Apostles and Prophets. These two Ministries work together. The Mystery of the Church was expressly revealed to the Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit.**

- Ephesians 2:20-22; 3:1-5

**6. Christ is THE PROPHET - THE WORD made flesh.**

- Deuteronomy 18:18

All other Prophets are pointers to Christ, and are the expression of Christ in the Body.

**7. There are various expressions of this same Ministry even as is evidenced in the Old Testament Prophets, so also in the New Testament Ministries.**

#### **A. The Old Testament Prophet**

Old Testament Prophets fall into two main categories, which helps in distinguishing the Ministry of New Testament Prophets from that of the Old Testament Prophets.

## **1. PROPHETS OF GUIDANCE**

Moses, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha and others, were Prophets particularly used in the Ministry of guidance. The Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Forth-telling and Fore-telling, and Miracles - all confirmed that they were Prophets. These revealed and declared the Mind of God to the people. They were God's spokesman.

## **2. PROPHETS OF VISION AND SCRIPTURE**

a. Prophets of Vision - Daniel and Zechariah especially are Prophets of Vision, or Seers, in which God gave Visions which they recorded under Divine inspiration as infallible prophecy.

They foretold the future and destiny of the Nations of earth. Daniel did not utter these things forth as in the Office of a spokesman, or Prophet.

b. Prophets of Scripture - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and all of the Prophets spoken of as "Major and Minor" Prophets moved especially in the realm of Prophecy - the Prophetic Scriptures. They moved in the fullest sense of Fore-telling and Forth-telling the destiny of the Nations, both Hebrew and Gentile.

Through these Prophets came infallible Scripture. God overruling the imperfections and infirmities of these men, and brought forth infallible revelation through fallible men, using their personalities under the Spirit's control.

However, most of these were not used in the area of miracles, as were the Prophets of guidance.

These Prophets of Scripture became God's voice for the generation of their time and also for all future generations.

### **Conclusions:**

The essential functions of the Old Testament Prophets were as follows:

1. Old Testament Prophets were used in guidance.
2. Old Testament Prophets were used to utter and write the infallible Scripture.

Guidance for the people or nation was given to the Prophet or Priest by the Spirit by means of Visions, Voice, Visitation, Word or Dream, or by Urim and Thummin because the Holy Spirit was not yet available for "all flesh" under the Old Covenant Dispensation.

Infallible Prophecy is spoken of in 2 Peter 1:20-21.

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

There will be variations of the Prophetic Ministry in the New Testament Church, as there was in the Old Testament, as God willed to use them, but these Essential differences will always remain.

## **B. The New Testament Prophet**

It is important to remember these facts.

1. No New Testament Prophet was ever used in guiding or controlling and governing the believer in the will of God, but often used in confirmation of the already known and revealed will of God.
2. No New Testament Prophet was ever used in the utterance or writing of infallible Scripture. All prophetic utterances were judged by the Word of Scripture.

- 1 Corinthians 14:29-30, 32

Most of the New Testament was written by Apostles.

The reason New Testament Prophets were not used for guidance, or for writing of infallible Scripture is evident! God was making a complete break between the operation of the Old Testament Prophet in this New Testament Dispensation of the Spirit, when the Spirit was available for all.

To go back to seeking guidance through Prophets is to resort back to Old Testament methods. The Bible teaches, Romans 8:14 :

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons (huios) of God."

Let us now define and distinguish between:

### **1. Prophecy of Scripture** - Inspired infallible Prophecy.

- 2 Peter 1:20

### **2. The Spirit of Prophecy** - Spoken in the spirit of Infallible Prophecy.

- Revelation 19:10

### **3. The Gift of Prophecy** - A word of edification, exhortation or encouragement, and comfort.

- I Corinthians 14:3; 31

### **4. The Office of a Prophet** - All may prophesy, but not all are prophets.

**Guidance in the New Testament for the Believer is by:**

- 1. The Infallible Word of God** - the complete revelation of His will as in Scripture.
- 2. The Indwelling Spirit of God** - always leading to and never contrary to the Word He inspired.
- 3. Ministries in the Church to confirm God's already know and revealed will.** Titus 1:5, Acts 20:17,28, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Thess 5:12.

**C. The Revealed New Testament Ministry of Prophets**

1. Agabus foretold (predicted) by the Spirit the coming famine.

- Acts 11:27-28

He did not give guidance as to what to do, but the disciples responded to send relief.

- Acts 11:29-30

2. The Prophets without doubt were the ones through whom "the Holy Ghost said..." (Acts 13:2)

This was confirmation of God's will, already known and revealed to Saul by the Lord Jesus on the Road to Damascus, and confirmed through Ananias, and now re-confirmed through the Prophets here at Antioch. Not guidance, but confirmation.

3. The Prophets ministered the Word of God to the Church, in exhortation and confirmation.

- Acts 15:32

A Prophet also means, "A public expounder of God's Word." This is the Ministry of forthtelling, telling forth the Word.

4. According to 1 Corinthians 14:29- 30,32, the Prophets had a distinct ministry Gift of utterance in prophecy, which was part of the prophetic Office.

It means "to flow, to speak. to bubble forth and over like a fountain" It involved:

**Exhortation to stir up"**  
**Edification, "to build up"**  
**Comfort, "to bind up"**  
**Conviction**  
**Confirmation,**  
**Revelation - Not infallible, but judged by the Word and the Spirit.**

5. Acts 21:8-14 gives a remarkable distinction between the Gift of Prophecy and the Office of a Prophet. Although Philip the Evangelist had four daughters who did prophesy, they were not prophetesses, God sent the Prophet Agabus down to foretell what would happen to Paul at Jerusalem, again confirming what Paul already knew.

6. The New Testament warns us to beware of False Prophets.

- Acts 13:6
- 2 Peter 2:1
- 1 John 4:1

By their fruits ye shall know them.

- Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24
- Revelation 16:13

The final test is the Law and the Testimony.

- Isaiah 8:20
- Deuteronomy 18:22
- Deuteronomy 13:1-5
- Jeremiah 28:9

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Both the Old Testament and New Testament abound with evidences and warnings against false prophets. whenever and wherever there are true prophets, Satan will stir up false prophets in order to deceive people.

Actually, there are more warnings in the Bible concerning false prophets than any other ministries.

However, these warnings are applicable to all. (Matthew 24:11,24; Jeremiah 5:30,31; 1 John 4:1-2; Mark 13:22 are some examples.)

In concluding this study, we note twelve major tests of prophets and these may be applied to any ministries in these days.

### **1. Test the Spirit - 1 John 4:1-3**

Is it the Holy Spirit, the human spirit or an evil spirit that is giving the utterance? Read I Kings 22 for examples of these three sources of utterances that have to be tested.

**2. Test of Fulfillment - Deuteronomy 18:22.**

Does the prophetic word come to pass or not? Time is the great prover of prophecies. History proves prophecy.

**3. Test of Worship - Deuteronomy 13:1-5.**

Does the prophetic word lead us to worship God or lead us away from the true God?

**4. Test of Doctrine - I John 4:1-6; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; Isaiah 8:19-20.**

Do the prophets speak in harmony with the major doctrines of redemption? Do they speak according to the sound doctrine of God's Word?

**5. Test of Fruit - Matthew 7:15-23**

What is the fruit of the prophet's lifestyle? It is by their fruits - not by their gifts - you shall know them. Fruit is the nature and character of the tree. Do not mistake charisma for character.

**6. Test of Covetousness - Micah 3:11; II Peter 2:1-3.**

Are these prophets making merchandise of the people of God? You will know them by their love of money. Remember Balam, Judas, Simon and I Timothy 6:9-11.

**7. Test of Ministry to the People - Jeremiah 23:18-23.**

Do these prophets turn the people from their sinful lifestyle to God? Without holiness of life none shall see the lord (Hebrews 12:7-14).

**8. Test of Humility - I Corinthians 8:1**

Does the prophetic word produce humility or pride in the heart? Does it exalt the person or Christ in you? Does it create hunger and thirst and love for the living God? Knowledge puffs up love builds up.

**9. Test of Value**

Do we value the infallible Word of God above the personal prophetic words? Most prophetic words confirm on a personal basis what the inspired and infallible Word has already told us to do on a general basis. Which is the greater value?

**10. Test of Confirmation**

Is the prophetic utterance confirmation to your spirit? Does it agree with the already known and revealed will of God? Is there the rule of peace in your heart? If not, seek the counsel of proven ministry.

### **11. Test of Control**

Prophets are not to use their giftings to manipulate, intimidate and control the people to whom they minister by fear. Does the prophet attempt to exercise control over your life? Does he manipulate or intimidate you by his utterances?

### **12. Test of Accountability - Matthew 12:34-37.**

To whom is the prophet accountable? Where is his home church? Does he have apostolic or other covering? Is he willing to take responsibility for his prophecies? Is he untouchable? Does he have "checks and balances?" All New Testament prophets belonged to and were under the authority of some local church.

By use of these questions, the believer can be blessed, strengthened, encouraged and established in the will of God by true prophets, and be safe guarded from false prophets that seek to control and manipulate people.

The Apostle Paul writes, "Let the prophets speak two or three and let the others judge... and the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets..." (I Corinthians 14:29-32).

"Do not quench the Spirit ... Do not despise prophecies... test (prove) all things; hold fast that which is good..." (I Thessalonians 5:19-21).

And finally, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (I Corinthians 14:27-28).