

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT
PART 2
APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

Over the past several weeks we have been looking at the Holy Spirit and we have seen that He is a person, that He is God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. We have seen that the Holy Spirit is in the world drawing people to Jesus, He is “**with**” them. Once a person comes to Jesus and asks Him to be Lord and Savior of their life, then the Holy Spirit comes “**in**” them, indwells them and the Holy Spirit is the one doing this work. But then there is another aspect in regards to the work of the Holy Spirit and that is that the Holy Spirit comes “**upon**” us and empowers us for service, and it is Jesus that does this for us. And this is the power to move the Gospel message forward, to be a witness of Jesus to a lost and dying world.

Now that we have laid down this firm foundation regarding the Holy Spirit it is time to look at these gifts of the Spirit that the Bible speaks of. And once again, this is a very difficult subject for some. They either negate all or some of the gifts or they are abused beyond belief by others. So we want to have a balance, and not just because a balance is good, but we need to have a Biblical balance in regards to the gifts. We need to understand what the Word of God has to say regarding these gifts and who they are for and when they are to be used or if they are even to be used today!

First of all when we see the word “**gifts**” in the New Testament, it usually comes from the Greek word, *CHARISMATA* and this word means, “gifts of grace” and it refers to the gifts or special abilities God has given believers through the Holy Spirit. And keep in mind that if these are grace gifts that means they are not given because we deserve them or that we are so spiritual, but God has given to us something that we truly don’t deserve. Look at the Corinthian church and how carnal they were and yet, they manifested the gifts of the Spirit.

Also, we need to understand that these grace gifts are not human talents that people possess because human talents are inadequate to do the work of God! These Spiritual gifts are abilities given to us by God for the purpose of service unto Him! Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 10:3-4, and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“For though we walk (live) in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds.”**

And here's the thing. Spiritual gifts are either supernatural abilities that God has bestowed on individuals, or God-given natural abilities that function through the direction of the Holy Spirit. We see that with the gifts such as miracles, tongues, healing, and prophecy are supernatural in origin. Other spiritual gifts, such as teaching, administration, and helps are God-given abilities to perform a particular role in God's program. In other words, the Holy Spirit takes these God-given abilities and uses them for His purposes in the lives of believers. And the Bible affirms that all gifts ultimately have their source in God. James 1:17 tells us this very thing as he wrote, "**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**"

The Scriptures speak of these spiritual gifts in four different portions of Scripture and some of them repeat the gifts, and some add new gifts to the list. You can find these in Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11, I Corinthians 12:4-11 and I Corinthians 12:28 and to help simplify this, let me put the gifts in these three categories.

- 1. Ministering Gifts:** These are the gifts of an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor/teacher, teacher, exhortation, discerner of the spirits, the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge.

- 2. Serving Gifts:** These are the gifts of ministering, giving, leadership, showing mercy and faith.

- 3. Sign Gifts:** These gifts are the gifts of prophecy, healing, miracles, tongues, and interpreting tongues.

Now keep in mind that there may be more than what I have listed, but also keep in mind that every believer has a spiritual gift and I believe God will give to each believer what they need in a given situation. Thus, over the next several weeks we will be looking at these gifts to see what they are about and if they are for today. And this morning we are going to be looking at the gifts that are spoken of in Ephesians chapter 4 and specifically looking at Apostles and Prophets.

Again, this is a touchy subject because there are those out there that say that they are an apostle or prophet. In fact, the Latter Rain Movement was big on this issue, promoting it. They see this five-fold ministry of the Spirit spoken of in Ephesians chapter 4 in operation today and we will deal with that as we move on. But let me share with you what Dr. C. Peter Wagner wrote on the “About” page of the Global Harvest Ministries website. He wrote regarding apostles and prophets,

“Back in the 1990s we began hearing the Holy Spirit speaking about restoring apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church as God originally designed (see Eph. 2:20). As I have explained in my book, *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (Regal Books), I gradually came to the realization that God had given me the gift of apostle, and that certain spheres of the body of Christ were recognizing that I had the office of apostle as well. Consequently, developing apostolic leadership in today’s church has now become an important function of GHM [Global Harvest Ministries].”

- Dr. C. Peter Wagner, Global Harvest Ministries website

And thus, you have all kinds of people who say they are apostles and prophets and God has raised them up for these last days. Let me show you how this all works with this story. We are told,

A farmer in southern Iowa used to tell story of a man who claimed to have owned a \$3,000 dog. When asked how he knew his dog was worth that much the man answered, “Because I traded it to the neighbor for two \$1,500 cats.”

So it goes with the apostles and prophets of the resuscitated Latter Rain movement. They know they are apostles and prophets because they declare each other to be such. How do you know you are an apostle? “A prophet told me.” How do you know he was a prophet? “An apostle told him.” Today there are thousands of individuals telling each other they are apostles and prophets.

- Source Unknown

First of all let me say this. In regards to this office of apostles and prophets, I don't think they are around today. I will show you why in a minute. But first, let me share with you where we find this in the Scriptures and we then will dig deeper. In Ephesians chapter 4, beginning in verse 7 we are told, **“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’ . . . And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”** Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-16.

We also see this office mentioned in I Corinthians 12:28, where Paul tells us, **“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”** And please understand he is not listing them in order of importance, but it is just a list and all the gifts are important.

Now look back at Ephesians 4:7 and notice what Paul said regarding gifts that Christ has given to the church. Now the question is, “What gifts did Christ give to the church?” Well, we don’t have to guess because Paul tells us in verse 11 of Ephesians chapter 4. He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers and teachers, also spoken of in I Corinthians 12:28. And we will deal more with this when we look at pastor/teachers but all pastors are supposed to be teachers!

And here’s the thing. There really is no such thing as a gift of apostle, but God has appointed men to be apostles and prophets and-so-on. They are gifts given to the church by Jesus. They, in a sense, are official titles and ministries. What is the function of these appointments?

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:12 that these men are given to the church so that they can equip the saints of God, build them up, allow the Word of God by the Spirit of God to transform their lives into the image of God, so that they can go out and do the work of the ministry.

As I said, this is primarily done through the teaching of God’s Word. That is how people are prepared for ministry. Remember what Paul told Timothy, that “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**” II Timothy 3:16-17. So let’s look at this office of an apostle a little more closely!

1. APOSTLES

Now the first appointment, the first gift that God gave to the church, was men who were apostles. Notice the way Jesus picked these men in Luke 6:12-16. We read **“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.”**

Now these 12 men we might call, “The Apostles” or the primary apostles, from which we could add Matthias and drop Judas Iscariot from the list because he turned against the Lord and then went out and hung himself. It is this group, the primary apostles, which we will look at first. Paul, I believe was an apostle to the Gentiles but not part of the 12.

Now what does this word, “apostle” mean? First of all, the word “apostle” occurs 10 times in the Gospels, 28 times in the book of Acts, 38 times in the Epistles, and 3 times in the book of Revelation, 79 times in all. And its primary meaning is related to men that were appointed by Christ for a very specific and unique purpose and function. The word “apostle” comes from the Greek word, APOSTOLOS and it means “sent forth”, “one sent” or “one who has been sent.”

Now there were certain qualifications that needed to be fulfilled to be one of the twelve apostles, and they are as follows:

A. First of all they were hand picked by the Lord. We are told in Mark 3:14, **“Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.”** Notice that Jesus was sending them out to preach, that is what the apostles did besides the many signs and wonders they performed. Jesus hand picked these men!

B. They had to meet certain criteria. Regarding this criteria, we are told in Acts 1:21-22, **“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”** These primary apostles had to be with Jesus from the beginning, when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. And they also had to be eyewitnesses of His resurrection, that is they had to see the risen Lord!

C. They were instruments that God used to give the church its doctrine. We are told in John 14:26, “**But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**” John wrote his gospel before 70 A. D., before the fall of Jerusalem and many feel he wrote his gospel in the early 60’s. And yet, even after some years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit brought to remembrance those things that Jesus said and did. Yes John 14:26 speaks to all of us in general, but I do believe it can be applied to the apostles also. In fact, in Acts 2:42a we read, “**And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine . . .**” It was not their doctrine, but the Words of God they brought to the church, for God gave these words to them.

D. They built the foundation from which the church was built upon. Paul tells us this in Ephesians 2:20-21, which says, “**having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.**” Remember that when the church started out there was no New Testament, and these men laid the foundation of the church, the apostles and the prophets, as God spoke through them to give them His doctrine.

E. They also had power to do miracles. Notice what we are told in II Corinthians 12:2, “**Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.**” These signs and wonders were used to authenticate their ministry, for when they said, “Thus says the Lord . . .” these miracles showed they were speaking for God.

F. They also have a future role to fulfill and we can read of that in Matthew 19:28, which says, “**So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’**” They will judge the 12 tribes of Israel! Also, in Revelation 21:14 we read, “**Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**” In the New Jerusalem their names will be on the walls of the city.

You see, these are the primary apostles, these 12 men, and when they died off, so too did this ministry. There is no such thing as apostolic succession, where these 12 men laid hands on another 12 men, and before they died off they laid hands on another 12 men. There is nothing that supports that idea. In fact, for this office we find no place in the church where they were instructed to ordain apostles.

Now, in saying that, there is another group of people who we will call secondary apostles. And as many would try to negate this, the Scriptures do support it. In Acts 14:14 we read, **“But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this . . .”** Barnabas is called an apostle, but not part of the 12, and I feel that Paul is also with this group of secondary apostles, although some may argue and place him with the first group. In the end we will find out.

We are also told in Galatians 1:19, **“But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.”** This James was not one of the 12, but He was the half brother of Jesus, and now the head of the church in Jerusalem, and he is called an apostle.

Also, in I Thessalonians we read, **“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ . . . For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness - God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.”** I Thessalonians 1:1, 2:5-6. Here we see Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy all considered being apostles and yet not part of the 12 primary apostles.

And then in Romans 16:7 we read, **“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”** Here we see Andronicus and Junia called apostles.

And the last point on these secondary apostles is found in Revelation 2:2, which tells us, **“know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars.”** Notice that the church in Ephesus tested those men who came through, those who called themselves apostles. Now they couldn't be the primary apostles, the 12, because most knew them very well. And so in Ephesus they tested those that called themselves apostles to see if they were genuine or not.

Because of those that tried to make a prophet off this position, take advantage of people there came into being a document called, “DIDACHE” which means, “teaching,” and the outside of this scroll read, “Teaching of the twelve apostles.” This document is the teachings of the twelve apostles that they left behind, and in it is a way to test to see if a person is an apostle or just a false apostle. Most believe this document was written sometime around the mid to late first century.

And we read in this document the following, “But concerning the apostles and prophets, so do you according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every apostle, when he cometh to you, be received as the Lord, but he shall not abide more than a single day, if there be need, a second, but if he abide three days, he is a false prophet. And when he departeth let the apostle receive nothing save bread, until he findeth shelter; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet.” So this was part of the test of apostles to see if they were true, or false, just ripping the people off, trying to make a profit off of God. And thus, this office of secondary apostles must have been around during the first century still.

Now we have discussed the primary apostles, the secondary apostles, and in the broadest sense of the word, we are all apostles in that we all have been sent forth with a commission by Christ, as Matthew 28:19-20 tells us, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”**

And that brings us to the million dollar question, “Are apostles still around today?” Yes and no! Listen carefully. The office of primary apostles has passed off the scene. Their ministry was unique, for a specific time, for they were laying down the foundation of the church to be built upon, the doctrine, the Word of God. And as you look at the historical record, as the first century came to a close, we see the office of apostle pass off the scene and the primary office being evangelists, pastor-teachers and teachers. We will discuss this more as we get to the prophets. Just remember, they laid the foundation, and you don’t keep laying a foundation once it has been laid. It is then that the rest of the building is built, which was done by the evangelists, pastor-teachers and teachers.

And, as I said, we in a sense are apostles in the broadest sense of the word. The word, “apostle” as I have said, means “to be sent.” Interestingly enough, The Living Bible translates this word as, “missionaries.” The Eastern Orthodox Church calls its missionaries, apostles. And the word, “apostle” in Latin means missionary. The idea is they are both sent, and so, in a sense apostles are still around, but not the primary apostles, that ministry, that gift has passed off the scene.

We need to also understand that there is no new doctrine being received, no new revelations, for we have the complete Word of God before us. And as I have said, most of the New Testament references of apostles are speaking of the primary apostles, and I believe that is what Ephesians 4:11 and I Corinthians 12:28 are talking about. And they have passed off the scene.

But, as I have said, we are beginning to see people today who are claiming to be apostles, getting direct revelation from God, getting new doctrine, placing themselves at the same level as the primary apostles, and many people are following their ways. They are false apostles and they need to be exposed. We are seeing a position that was used by God for a specific period of time and for a special purpose, and then it passed off the scene, now trying to be resurrected. They are mistaken; the foundation has already been laid and you don't pour another foundation on the top of the foundation you just laid. That would make no sense!

2. PROPHETS

Now as we study prophets, understand that this is not speaking of the gift of prophecy, which we will deal with in several weeks. But this is speaking of the office of a prophet. Now what this was about, what a prophet did was he was someone who forth-told the things of God and foretold the things of God. That is he spoke the Words of God and he also spoke of future events with 100% accuracy as God revealed things to them.

The Hebrew word for “prophet” is NABIY, and it carries with it the idea of someone who spoke on the behalf of another and the biblical thought is they spoke for God. The New Testament Greek word, PROPHETES, carries with it the same idea. In the Old Testament it seems that a large part of their ministry was foretelling of future events. They spoke of the children of Israel coming into the Land of Canaan, the coming Messiah, the Messiah’s brutal death, His resurrection, the coming judgment, the restoration of Israel into the land, the kingdom age and-so-on. But they did also speak forth the Words of God to the people, letting the people know what God desired of them, what they were to do and-so-on.

The first mention of a prophet in the Old Testament was Abraham in Genesis 20:7. But the reality is the person who functioned in that position the way we think of a prophet, was Moses. He not only spoke forth the Words of God, but he also spoke of future events that would come to pass.

In the New Testament the primary function of the prophets was speaking forth the Words of God or forth-telling. But they were not limited to that, for in Acts 21:10-11 we read, **“And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.””**” Agabus, a prophet, warned Paul of what he was going to encounter in Jerusalem, which did come to pass.

Also, in Acts 11:27-30 we read, **“And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”** Notice,

Agabus, along with the other prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch to warn them of a coming famine. And the disciples in Antioch didn't ignore their warning but responded by sending relief to the people in Judea by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

As we looked at the apostles, they moved around a lot, they had more of an itinerant ministry. And as they traveled they laid down the doctrine of God to the people. Now the prophets tended to be more local, speaking the Word of God to the local church, encouraging them to move ahead, admonishing them not to give up, strengthening them in the faith, and-so-on.

Now, do we see this in the early church? Yes, we most certainly do. In Acts 13:1 we read, **“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”** And we are told in Acts 15:32 what they did in the church, **“Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.”**

Now in saying that some will say, “Then why don’t we have prophets in the church today?” And many times they will go to I Corinthians 14:29-31, which says, “**Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.**” And thus, they will make this the pattern for the church to follow.

I disagree with that teaching. Paul visited Corinth around 52 or 53 AD and the church was started as people got saved. He wrote his first letter to the Corinthian church in 56 AD, and thus the church was still very young. Understand when a community got saved they all were new Christians, and thus, no one was ready to be a pastor or elder, they were still babes in Christ.

Thus, the prophets were, in a sense, the forerunner to the pastors, elders, and-so-on. Also the New Testament was not yet completed and so the prophets would exhort and encourage and strengthen these new believers with the Word of God until God raised up pastors to oversee the church.

Now I do understand that there are some groups who totally disagree with that line of reasoning. The Plymouth Brethren are one such group who has no pastors, no leaders in the church and they use I Corinthians 14 as their pattern for the church, believing that all should be able to stand up and speak for God as God leads them during the service. And thus, in I Corinthians 14:26 we read, “**How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.**” And thus, that is their pattern for their church.

First of all this was a very unique situation that when the church was born all were new Christians. And so you can't use I Corinthians 14 as the pattern for the church to follow. Remember, they didn't have the New Testament yet and so this is the way God built up believers in the early church, with a Psalm, with a teaching, with revelations, and-so-on. The problem in Corinth is they let it get out of control and it was chaotic, and so Paul rebukes them for it, as He says, "**For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**" I Corinthians 14:33. But this was only a temporary thing, until God could raise up leaders within each local body!

Then what is the pattern for the church? If you want to find out the pattern for the church you go to the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus. I Timothy and Titus which were written around 63 AD and II Timothy 67 AD. And so some 10 years after the church was started, Paul now gives to us what are the proper workings of the church. And understand, this is not my idea, for Paul said in I Timothy 3:14-15, "**These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**"

Interestingly enough, we find not mention of apostles or prophets in the Pastoral Epistles. Why? Because they were passing off the scene and would not be in the church anymore. They laid the foundation, as Ephesians 2:20-21 told us. You see, once the foundation was laid by the apostles and the prophets, their work was completed, and now the walls of the building are being put together by the evangelists, pastor-teachers and teachers. We are "living stones" building up the temple of God, as I Peter 2:5 tells us. And so I believe the office of a prophet has passed off the scene.

Now what do the Pastoral Epistles tell us about the workings of the local church? They tell us the qualifications of pastors, elders, and deacons. They warn of exposing false doctrine. Speak of how to dress. They tell us of the role of women in the church. They admonish the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. They tell us how to treat people, widows, elders, to not be quick to judge but evaluate each situation. They tell us to teach other faithful men for the work of the ministry. They tell us to stay focused on the work, of having the mind of Christ. They tell us to preach the Word even when people don't want to hear it, when they would rather be entertained instead. In Titus 1:5 he is told to appoint elders not prophets in each city! He also speaks of rebuking false teachers. Not getting into foolish disputes with people that are looking for an argument. And Paul admonishes them to continue doing the work of God.

Yes, in Corinth the focus was the gifts of the Spirit because they had no pastors and no written Word. But we have pastors today and we have the written Word, and thus, that is the focus, the teaching of the Word of God by men God has appointed to that position. And within that we will see the gifts exercised.

Now there are some today that feel they are prophets or that the office of a prophet is still in operation. As I said, I don't! I don't think the Scriptures support the idea that the office of a prophet is still in operation today. In a report from Media Spotlight regarding the emergence of modern day prophets we read,

. . . The prophetic ministry cannot be separated from the office of a prophet. To some degree, every believer has a 'prophetic ministry,' because we all may receive a word from the Lord, usually a Scripture to reprove, rebuke, exhort, or encourage one another. But this is not what these men practice; they claim a prophetic ministry similar to that of Old Testament prophets: revealed knowledge gained from direct, face-to-face encounters with God; they give directive prophecies to individuals, entire congregations, and to the Church at large. They want the glory of a prophet, but not the responsibility.

- Media Spotlight, Latter-Day Prophets, p. 6

Now some may feel I am being too harsh and I should not judge them because I don't know their hearts! You right, I don't know their hearts and that is not what I am judging. It is their actions; their doctrine that they say is from God and yet goes contrary to God's Word. In fact, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 14:29, "**Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.**" Why did they do this? To make sure what they were saying lines up with the Word of God!

Let me give you one more quote, and then we will look at the standards a prophet must keep from the Scriptures, and see if they match up to what is being taught today regarding this office of a prophet. Again, this is from Media Spotlight, which says,

Bob was told that the general level of prophetic revelation in the church was about 65% accurate at this time. Some are only 10% accurate, a very few of the most mature prophets are approaching 85 to 95% accuracy. Prophecy is increasing in purity, but there is still a long way to go for those who walk in this ministry. This is actually grace for the church now, because 100% accuracy in this ministry will bring a level of accountability to the church which she is too immature to bear at this time; it would result in too many ‘Ananias and Sapphira’s.’

- Media Spotlight, Latter-Day Prophets, p.11

With that level of accuracy, how do you know what to believe and what not to believe? You don’t! What if you get the prophet that is only 10% right? Or how about this, would you go along with this? Would you fly in a plane that only crashed 35% of the time? Of course not! Then why are we taken in by these false prophets and their empty words? And the Scriptures do not support the idea of the prophet maturing in this gift, there was no room for that as you will see. Let’s look at the standards that God has set, not man regarding this office of a prophet and see what that standard is all about.

STANDARDS FOR PROPHETS

1. SPEAK FORTH THE TRUTH OF GOD - DEUTERONOMY 13:1-5

First of all they needed to speak the truth of God and we can read of this in Deuteronomy 13:1-5, where we are told, **“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’ - which you have not known – ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.”**

Notice what these false prophets were doing. They were not only saying they were speaking for God but they did miracles, healing people, and-so-on. But understand this, that does not make them a prophet of God, even the demons can do false signs and wonders, transforming themselves into angels of light, just as the Anti-Christ will do, and if possible, even the elect will be deceived. Today we are seeing many Christians being deceived by demonic forces and they are attributing these things to God.

The key here is if they lead you down a path away from God, leading you to false gods, then God says they are not His prophets and they shall be put to death. I hate to say this, and I don't want to offend anyone who might hold these men in high esteem, but those that are teaching that we are gods, that Jesus didn't purchase our atonement on the cross of Calvary but had to defeat Satan in Hell, becoming a born again man, are leading people away from God. You can believe in health, wealth and prosperity, and that won't lead you away from salvation, for the most part. But when you make yourself equal with God, make God equal with the devil, you are heading into dangerous waters! In the Old Testament, if a prophet lead someone away from God, they would be put to death!

2. MUST COME TO PASS - DEUTERONOMY 18:20-22

This seems to be an obvious one, but let's read in Deuteronomy 18:20-22, which says, **“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ - when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”**

Here it is folks, if a person calls himself a prophet, speaks for God and it doesn't come to pass, they are a false prophet and they were put to death. There was no room for growth, you either spoke forth with 100% accuracy or your ministry was over and so were you! God was trying to keep things pure so people would know what the truth was and what a lie was. It is as Isaiah 8:19-20 says, "**And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**" That seems so obvious to us and yet today, how many Christians are involved in the occult and thinking there is nothing wrong with it!

I know, some will read I Thessalonians 5:20, which say's, "**Do not despise prophecies**" and they make their case for not coming against prophecies or judging them. But listen to what verses 21 and 22 have to say. We read, "**Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.**" We are to test all things in the light of God's Word, and if it can't stand the test, then toss it aside for it is evil!

Yes God still speaks to us but not with new revelations or doctrines, and this is where many are messed up today. People receive a specific word from God, (a RHEMA) that is specific for their life, not new doctrine. It might have to do with what job to take, what television shows to watch, what kind of Christian music to listen to, and-so-on. And they take what God has given to them and make it into a LOGOS, or a general word for the entire body of Christ to follow.

That is very dangerous and I will tell you why. Several years ago there was a man going around telling people that God told him that a full quiver of arrows was 12. And thus, you had to have 12 children or you were not obeying the will of God for your life, you were living in rebellion. He was even telling women that had their tubes tied, to get them reversed. Now what God may have spoken specifically to him, RHEMA, he made into a general statement for the body of Christ, a LOGOS. And that my friend is very dangerous! I know what my quiver is, and it is two and I am done!

Let me leave you with this thought from II Peter 2:1-3. We read, **“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”** We see that over and over today, prophets, leaders ripping people off to make a buck. I wish Christians would wise up to these scams that are being done upon them, that they would be responsible for their walk.

Yes, the office of apostle and prophet was needed for the laying down of the foundation of the church, but the office has passed off the scene. The foundation has been laid back in the first century! Now we have evangelists, pastor-teachers, and teachers that are building upon that foundation, not with new doctrine, but with the Word of God, and as souls are saved the building is being completed. Next time we will take a look at these other gifts God gave to the church, men who are appointed by God for the equipping of the saints, to do the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.