

Question: "Are there prophets in the church today?"

Answer: The gift of prophet seems to have been a temporary gift given by Christ for the laying of the foundation of the church. Prophets were foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20). The prophet proclaimed a message from the Lord to the early believers. Sometimes a prophet's message was revelatory (new revelation and truth from God) and sometimes a prophet's message was predictive (see Acts 11:28 and 21:10). The early Christians did not have the complete Bible. Some early Christians did not have access to any of the books of the New Testament. The New Testament prophets "filled the gap" by proclaiming God's message to the people who would not have access to it otherwise. The last book of the New Testament (Revelation) was not completed until late in the first century. So, the Lord sent prophets to proclaim God's Word to His people.

Are there true prophets today? If the purpose of a prophet was to reveal truth from God, why would we need prophets if we have the completed revelation from God in the Bible? If prophets were the "foundation" of the early church, are we still building the "foundation" today? Can God give someone a message to deliver to someone else? Absolutely! Does God reveal truth to someone in a supernatural way and enable that person to deliver that message to others? Absolutely! But is this the biblical gift of prophecy? No.

Whatever the case, whenever a person claims to be speaking for God (the essence of prophecy) the key is to compare what is said with what the Bible says. If God were to speak through a person today, it would be in 100% complete agreement with what God has already said in the Bible. God does not contradict Himself. 1 John 4:1 instructs us, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 declares, "Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good." So, whether is it a "word from the Lord" or a supposed prophecy, our response should be the same. Compare what is said to what the Word of God says. If it contradicts the Bible, throw it out. If it agrees with the Bible, pray for wisdom and discernment as to how to apply the message (2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:5).

Question: "Is the personal prophecy concept biblical?"

Answer: There are some within the Christian faith, predominantly in Charismatic/Pentecostal churches, who view/practice the gift of prophecy as giving personal advice with a "thus says the Lord" presentation. Sadly, those who practice personal prophecy in this manner are often not any different from those who portray themselves as psychics. In fact, there are prophetic hotlines as "Christian" alternatives to psychic hotlines. Some in the personal prophecy movement advertise with statements such as "come get your prophetic reading," again, very similar to the terminology psychics employ. This understanding and practice of the gift of prophecy is completely unbiblical.

Biblically speaking, the gift of prophecy is the Spirit-empowered ability to declare revelation from God (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28). Prophecy sometimes, but not always, involves proclaiming revelation from God in regards to the future. In both the Old and New Testaments, God used prophets and/or the gift of prophecy to reveal truth to people. Prophecy is proclaiming the truth of God, it is special revelation, truth that cannot be discerned by any other means. Through a prophet, God would reveal truth that the people needed to know, and sometimes, that truth would be recorded in written form. This, ultimately, resulted in the Bible, the Word of God, the ultimate special revelation from God.

The completion of the Bible impacts the nature of the gift of prophecy. The Bible contains all the revelation we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). As a result, the gift of prophecy transitioned from primarily being a declaration of new revelation from God, to primarily (or exclusively) being a declaration of what God has already revealed, as recorded in His Word.

This is not to say that God would never give one person a message to deliver to another person. God can, will, and does use people in whatever ways He sees fit. But the fact that the Word of God is perfect and complete means that we are to rely on it for guidance. We are not to rely on prophets, prophetic hotlines, and prophetic readings. God's Word contains the truth we need. God's Word presents the wisdom we need to know to properly apply His truth. Beyond that, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide, comfort, and teach us (John 14:16, 26). Using the concept of personal prophecy to gain influence over people and making them dependent on "prophetic guidance" is a blatant distortion of the biblical gift of prophecy. Any time people trust the fallible words of men instead of the infallible Word of God, it is a travesty.