

# Real Prophets Of God

The ministry of a prophet is crucial in the outworking of God's glorious plans but is little understood by most churchgoers.

One view suggests the ministry of a prophet is confined to writing the Scriptures. But note Abraham, Joseph, Balaam, Anna, John the Baptist, Agabus and Judas (not Judas Iscariot) were prophets (see Genesis 20:7, 40:1-36, 2 Peter 2:15-16, Luke 2:36, 7:28, Acts 11:27-28 and 15:32) and there is no Biblical evidence that any of these wrote parts of the Bible itself.

No prophet of God today, however, has any authority from Him to add their revelations as extra books of the Bible.

The extreme dispensationalist view argues that the ministry of a prophet ceased when the Apostles died. But 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11-16 do not support such a view.

Another view says that all those whom God uses to manifest the simple gift of prophecy (see 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 14:1-6) have the ascension ministry leadership gift of a prophet. But this is wrong. Just as all believers can evangelise, pastor or shepherd and/or teach others on occasion, only some of them have an ascension ministry leadership gift of an evangelist, pastor or teacher.

## The three main God-given functions of prophets

True prophets have three main God-given functions:

- The first is *to reveal God's plans and purposes* to the world in general, His people in general, His people at a particular location or church or to individual believers or specific non-believers (see Judges 4:4-6, 1 Samuel 3:4-4:1, 8:1-22, 2 Samuel 12:1-15, 1 Kings 13:1-3, 18:1, 20:41-42, 21:17-19, the Books of Isaiah through to Malachi, Acts 11:27-28 and 21:10-11). Such revelations can come suddenly to the prophet or can occur in a gradually unfolding sense over days, months or even years.
- The second is *to lay foundations* in relation to *true doctrine* from God and *associated godly right practical living*. God's prophets may preach and/or teach such foundations. Apostles are called to do the same foundation-laying.  
In 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, Paul referred to his ministry of laying foundations. Paul was both an apostle (see 1 Corinthians 1:1) and a prophet (see Acts 13:1 and 15:30-32 – Note verses 30-31 in context refer to Paul and Barnabas). Ephesians 2:20 refers to apostles and prophets as foundational ministries.  
1 Corinthians 3:11 reveals that the only true foundation any ministry can lay is Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:10-11 shows even the Old Testament prophets' ministry was related to Jesus Christ.  
Prophets often also have a teaching gift (see Acts 13:1). Paul is a classic example of this (see 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11).
- The third is *to call* the world, the church in general, a local church or individuals *to repent and turn from their sins to God*.

One common false view claims that this aspect of prophetic ministry is just related to the Mosaic or Old Covenant dispensation and was limited to only the Israelites under this Covenant. But note the prophet Daniel was led by God to tell the pagan Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar to turn from his sins (see Daniel 4:27). The prophet Jonah was called by the Lord to urge the pagan city of Nineveh to turn from their sins to Him (see Jonah 1:1-2 and 3:1-4:11).

Prior to the beginning of the Mosaic Covenant, Noah preached God's righteousness to the wicked people of his time. 2 Peter 2:5 says Noah was "**a preacher of righteousness**". The Bible does not say Noah was a prophet. But some may argue the expression "**preacher of righteousness**" refers to Noah having a prophetic ministry to the people before the Great Flood.

I have never had anyone, who believes the theory that New Testament prophets do not emphasise repentance and turning from known sins, provide even one clear unambiguous verse to prove such nonsense. As will be seen in following sections, Jesus – the perfect New Testament prophet – and the prophets Paul, Barnabus and John all stressed repentance in their ministry. Because of this false idea, many mistake *inspirational salesmen-like motivators* for God's prophets.

## **Jesus Christ – the perfect prophet**

Jesus Christ was the perfect New Testament prophet from God (see Acts 3:22-23). He *revealed God's plans and purposes* to people. In John 8:26, Jesus said: "**...but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.**" In John 15:15, Jesus said in part: "**...for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.**" Refer also to John 8:38, 12:49, 14:10 and 14:24.

Christ also laid *solid foundations* in relation to the Gospel, conversion to Him (see Matthew 9:35, 11:5, 12:39-40, 18:3, Mark 1:14-15, 10:33-34, 15:15-16, Luke 4:18, 9:21-22, 17:25, 18:31-34, 20:1, 24:46-47, John 3:5, 3:14-21 and 11:25-26) and to correct doctrine and right practical living (see Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

Jesus also *stressed repentance* (see Matthew 4:17, 9:13, Mark 1:15, 6:12, Luke 5:32, 13:3, 13:5, 15:7, 15:10, 17:3, 17:4 and 24:47) and *turning from known sins* (see Matthew 5:21-6:7, 6:16-18, 6:24-7:6, 7:15-23, 23:1-33 and many other verses in the four Gospels).

## **The four main tests for recognising true prophets**

### **Does their preaching and teaching agree with the Word?**

The main test of whether a person is a true or false prophet is whether *what the person preaches and teaches* is in *agreement with the written Word of God*.

In Isaiah 8:19-20, God reveals how to test whether predictors and miracle-workers are from Him: "**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.**" God says if someone does not speak in agreement with His Word, they do not have His light in them. Instead they have darkness in them.

Note Zechariah 1:1-4 shows the prophet Zechariah preached in agreement with God's former prophets. In 1 Corinthians 14:37-38, Paul stresses that true prophets must accept that what Paul wrote is God's commandments: ***"If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord..."***

## **Fruit**

The second test of whether a person is really a prophet of God or a false prophet is the *fruit* in the person's life. In Matthew 7:15-18, Jesus said: ***"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit."***

True prophets of God live *holy* lives of *integrity*. They are not perfect and battle the flesh like we all do (see James 5:17). But they are not people who continuously practice sexual immorality, love money or use godliness as a means of becoming rich or wealthy (see Revelation 2:20-21, 2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 11).

In 1 Timothy 6:5, Paul commands us to withdraw ourselves from those who use godliness or Christianity as a means of financial gain. 1 Timothy 6:5 and 10 warns: ***"useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself...For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*** In 2 Corinthians 2:17, Paul said: ***"For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God..."***

Also note in Matthew 22:40, Jesus revealed that all of the writings of the Prophets are based on *love* for *God* and *other* people: ***"On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*** This means that even the prophets' warnings of judgement, rebuking and correcting of specific sins and strong calls for people to turn from their sins to God were based on *love*.

## **Attitude to repentance and turning from sin**

The third test of whether a person is a true or false prophet is whether the person's *preaching* and *lifestyle* is centred on *turning others from their sins to God*.

Jeremiah 23:21-22 proves true prophets listen to God and speak His revealed Words which turn people from their evil ways: ***"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings."***

Micah 3:8 refers to the type of ministry a true prophet of God has: ***"But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin."***<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 24:25 promises a good blessing to those who

---

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 3:16-21 refers to the type of ministry God calls His prophets to flow in by His Spirit's power: ***"Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, You shall surely die, and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his***

rebuke the wicked: ***“But those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.”***

Micah 2:11 refers to false prophets predicting much wine and beer for religious people who refused to turn from their sins: ***“If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,’ even he would be the prattler of this people.”***

Lamentations 2:14 records false prophets have false revelations and do not uncover peoples’ sins: ***“Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captives, but have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions.”***

The prophet John the Baptist’s ministry had a strong focus on preaching repentance and turning from sins (see Matthew 3:8-10). Paul and Barnabus, who were both apostles and prophets (see Acts 13:1), preached to unbelievers to turn from their sins (see Acts 14:14-15 and 26:18). Acts 17:30 records Paul preached that God was now commanding all people everywhere to repent: ***“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”***

Paul’s emphasis on repentance is also seen in Acts 26:19-20 when he said: ***“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”***

The Apostle John was also a prophet. Supernaturally, the Lord showed him the marvellous things found in the Book of Revelation. But note Revelation 1:9-3:22 indicates Jesus Christ revealed God’s plans and purposes to John about specific local churches and individuals and inspired him to call them to repent and turn from various sins.

### **Are they people-pleasers?**

The fourth test of whether someone is a true prophet of God or a false prophet is whether the person is driven by a *desire to be popular* among churchgoers and/or other religious people. True prophets of God like Paul aim to please God and not people. In Galatians 1:10, Paul said: ***“...Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of God.”***

The desire for popularity has *“killed” more prophets than persecution*. Some originally God-anointed prophets have ruined their ministries by seeking high sales for their books and tapes regardless of whether what they are saying is pleasing to God the Holy Spirit and in agreement with the written Word.

---

*wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul’.”*

## **Miracles, signs and wonders are not the main sign**

Some Christians imagine prophets always have spectacular eye-catching miracles, signs and wonders associated with their ministries. But note John 10:41 records John the Baptist performed no dramatic miracles. The four Gospels do not mention one miracle through the Baptist. This is even though in Matthew 11:11, Jesus said that up until that time, there had not been one person born who was greater than John the Baptist. This means the Baptist was at least as great as Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel and other Old Testament prophets. So just because modern ascension-gifted ministry leaders do not perform great miracles does not disqualify them from being God's prophets.

Do not gullibly believe that just because a person claims to be a prophet and performs awe-inspiring miracles, this proves they are God-appointed. Note in Deuteronomy 13:1-5, Moses who was a true prophet reveals someone can do the above and be a false prophet: *“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, and 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.”*

Zedekiah was a false prophet who spoke in the Name of the Lord and claimed to have the Holy Spirit's anointing (see 1 Kings 22:11-28). Simon deceived thousands of Samaritans who had parts of the Old Testament Scriptures. They wrongly believed he was performing miracles by God's power (see Acts 8:9-11).

## **Those with success rates like fortune-tellers**

Some people like to call themselves prophets of God. But they do not show full evidence of being one. They may have some real God-given healing and deliverance miracles in their ministries on occasion. They may run around giving personal predictions to individuals in various meetings. But when you check, you find most of their personal predictions are so general that they could not fail to happen. For example they predict, “You are going to be blessed” or “You are going to be anointed by God” or “Jesus Christ is going to do good things in your life” or “You are going to have to make important decisions soon. So trust God”.

Such general predictions may be from God, but they are so general, it is almost impossible for them not to be fulfilled. Also in relation to more specific predictions of such people, you find years later that most of these are never fulfilled. They have success rates similar to fortune-tellers.

I have spoken to many believers who have been given specific predictions by so-called “prophets of God” which have never been fulfilled. These believers became discouraged and very confused as a result of these unfulfilled predictions.

Prophets are not perfect. Nathan made a mistake in personal judgement one time when he expressed mere human wisdom to David. God sent him back to change this advice (see 2 Samuel 7:1-17). Because of his false human reasoning, Joseph could not at first accept his father Jacob's God-given revelations about Joseph's two sons (see Genesis 48:17-20).

But note making mistakes in personal judgement is different from speaking false "Words of the Lord". It is a very serious matter to claim to speak "Words of the Lord" when they are not really from Him. In Deuteronomy 18:20-22, God reveals that those, who regularly give predictions which are not fulfilled, are not really His prophets: ***"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."***

## **New Testament prophets can confirm God's personal guidance to us**

In Old Testament times, few of God's people had the Holy Spirit (see Numbers 11:16-30 and John 7:39). So God approved of His people going to His prophets to inquire about His will (see 1 Kings 22:5-28, 2 Kings 3:11 and Jeremiah 42:1-4).

But under the New Covenant, all believers have the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, 2 Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 1:13) and are led by Him themselves (see John 14:26, 16:13 and Romans 8:14). So in the case of specific personal guidance to individuals, God does not lead New Covenant believers by His prophets. His prophets are merely called to *confirm* what the Holy Spirit has already revealed to their hearts.

Note Acts 21:10-13 reveals the prophet Agabus gave Paul a God-given revelation. But Paul accepted this only because it *confirmed* what God had revealed to him earlier (see Acts 20:22-23). Be very careful about "revelations" and predictions from others. 1 Kings 13:1-32 records a true prophet of God was deceived by the false revelations of an old backslidden prophet.

The ministry of a prophet is one which will continue right up until Jesus' Second Coming.

### **Bible Study Questions**

1. Are Biblical prophets only those who wrote parts of the Scriptures?
2. Explain in detail the three main God-given functions of true prophets.
3. What aspects of a prophet's ministry manifested in the life of Jesus Christ, the perfect New Testament prophet?
4. Explain in detail each of the four main tests which can be used to test if someone is a true prophet of God.
5. Why are miracles, signs and wonders not the main sign a person is a prophet of God?
6. Give examples of prophets of God making mistakes in their personal judgement.
7. But what does Deuteronomy 18:20-22 reveal should be our attitudes to those who speak false so-called "Words of the Lord"?

8. Why is it easy to give very general predictions which are fulfilled but not really be a true prophet of God?
9. What is the difference between how God led believers through His prophets in Old Testament times and under the New Covenant?