

# Seek The Old Paths

*“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein” (Jeremiah 6:16)*

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## Are There Prophets Today In The Biblical Sense?

Charles A. Pledge

This question was dealt with in the Question period at the Sixth Annual Mississippi Lectureship on July 30, 1991, by this writer. By request, we are abbreviating the answer in article form. Some controversy surrounds the claim by a Mississippi preacher, Haskel Sparks, to be a prophet of God. We affirm without hesitation that only five possible reasons exist for such a claim:

- 1) Ignorance of what the Bible teaches on the subject.
- 2) Efforts to claim special insight into God's will.
- 3) Efforts to boost an inflated ego.
- 4) A design to attract disciples to oneself, or an organization.
- 5) A combination of two or more of any of the above.

The Old Testament uses a number of words and phrases to indicate one who was inspired of God to receive and communicate divine revelation. **Seer, prophet, Man of God** are phrases used more than 1,500 times to refer to that class of individuals God mentions in Jeremiah 7:25: *“Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them.”*

The New Testament uses the word “prophet” 67 times and “false prophet” four times. **Prophetes** and **Pseudo-prophetes** are the words used in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, different words are used simply to emphasize a different aspect of the

work of God's special servants, the prophets. A seer of God (Heb. **raah**, used 1332 times) meant *to see*. Gad and Samuel were called *prophet* and *seer* in the same statements. This emphasized the manner in which they received revelation from God. Over and over in the Old Testament, different prophets referred to how they *saw* God's word. They received in a vision the word they saw. That revelation was divinely stamped upon their mind. Another Hebrew word (**chozeh**) is used 16 times. This refers to *a beholder in a vision*. Derived from this word is **kawzone** which means a vision, or a revelation. Among the many passages using this word are: Proverbs 29:1 (an often misused passage); Jeremiah 14:14; Isaiah 1:1; Daniel 1:17.

The Hebrew word **nabiy** is used 314 times in the Old Testament and translated prophet. This word literally means *spokesman, or mouth* for another. We read in Exodus 4:16: *“And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.”* We read again in Exodus 7:1: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.”* Observe that God said Aaron shall be *thy* prophet; your mouth, or spokesman.

**In every instance this word is used connecting the spokesman with God, inspiration is indicated, or implied by the word.**

In the New Testament the word **prophetes** is used 67 times. In each instance in connection with God it refers to an

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Even a cursory reading of the Bible use of the terms variously translated prophet and seer, as well as the others referred to, demands that we understand both Old and New Testament uses to mean an inspired spokesman for God.

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inspired speaker. This word is used four times with the prefix **pseudo** (false) indicating that those who claimed to be prophets were false prophets. The word pseudo derives from **pseudo-mai** which means to utter an untruth.

In the Bible there are only two kinds of prophets: true and false; God's and man's; inspired and all others. God's prophets are always inspired men who speak for God by communicating his revelation given to them by some manner. These men could always prove their claim if necessary by performing a miracle. God never sent anyone out in Old Testament times to speak his will without empowering him to prove his claim to be from God. The **Man of God** of whom we read in I Kings 13 was able to withstand the wicked king Jeroboam II. Some argue over the use of this phrase as referring to a prophet of God but the context clearly demands this in I Kings 13; I Kings 17, and 2 Chronicles 25:7, 9.

Even a cursory reading of the Bible use of the terms variously translated prophet and seer, as well as the others referred to, demands that we understand both Old and New Testament uses to mean an inspired spokesman for God. Regardless of how the English dictionary defines the word *prophet*, we must understand it in view of what the Bible teaches. Do we accept the secular definition of baptism as pouring or sprinkling? In spite of what the English dictionary says, we accept only the scriptural definition of immersion; *submersion; to plunge; dip*, etc. Both Scripture and consistency demand that we accept the Bible definition for prophet rather than a secular definition. If we allow one to bind his own definition on a word regardless of truth, we surrender the argument. We must never allow error to gain such an advantage.

Objections are made to the foregoing conclusions on the basis that because there are false prophets indicated as continuing (II Peter 2:1), true prophets must also exist. We merely point out from Matthew 24:24: "*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*" If true prophets exist on earth because false prophets exist, then the true Christ must also be on earth. The same passage that demands one also demands the other. Some claim to be apostles. Does that demand that a true apostle be on earth? If one is demanded, so is the other.

The fact of this matter is that we have established for us in Scripture, prophets, apostles, and the Christ. The Scripture record is the basis for

men making false claims to these offices. And, the claim to be such is false. True, the Mormons have apostles; but not apostles of Christ. They are Mormon apostles. They belong to the Mormon church and speak for the Mormon church; not God. The same may be said of their prophets. What is said of their prophets and apostles is also correctly said of all who claim to be either apostle or prophet. All are in the same category when claiming to be of God. They all are false!

It is a tragedy when one claiming to be a gospel preacher claims to be a prophet of God. Prophet Jones of Detroit, Michigan, also claimed to be a prophet of God. He reaped millions of dollars from his claim. What does this brother expect to reap other than God's wrath. It is regrettable that one who claims to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ stoops to such depths seeking for recognition. The division he causes among brethren is sufficient to warrant marking and avoiding him. Some are so gullible as to accept any claim made by anyone they like. Apparently this preacher has enough admirers and followers to create tension among several churches and individuals over this matter. We pray he will repent of this foolish and indefensible error and return to faithful service. Until then we urge brethren to practice both Romans 16:17-18 and Titus 3:10 in his case. He teaches an untruth in claiming to be a prophet of God. He divides brethren over the claim. Whether he is making a deliberate effort or not, he is drawing disciples after him in this matter, creating division among brethren.

This brother may deny the charges but the facts are indisputable evidence of the charges. Let him either repent and help heal the division he is causing or else let him be marked and avoided by all faithful brethren.

We do not know this man personally. We have no personal animosity whatsoever toward him. We understand he is personable and likable when he chooses to be. We are told he is a good speaker and could be an effective worker for the Lord if he would avoid error. Our prayers are that he will repent and return to a constructive course of service in the kingdom.

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## MOVING?

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# MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

Mac Deaver

**T**HERE are various ways of considering the prophets that are discussed in the Bible. We can distinguish between the major and minor prophets (as per length of their books), the writing and non-writing prophets, and the true and false prophets. The false prophets prophesied out of their own heart (Ezek. 13:2), caused God's people to err (Lam. 2:14), and failed to uncover the iniquity of God's people (Lam. 2:14). They were lying deceivers (Jer. 14:14).

It is interesting that God gave two basic ways of testing the prophets. If a prophet predicted something that failed to develop, then he was to be recognized as false (Deut. 18:22). And if a prophet gave a sign or wonder which came to pass, but whose efforts were to cause God's people to go after other gods, then he also was to be recognized as a false prophet (Deut. 13:1-3).

In Israel there were kings, princes, priests, and prophets (Jer. 2:26). God would often refer to the prophets as "*my servants the prophets*" (Jer. 29:19; Zech. 1:6). Let us consider a few things regarding those servants.

**First, they were sent by God.** In Amos 7:14 we read,

*"Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees; and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel."*

Thus, the great Amos declared that his work was not personally assumed and, thus, without divine authorization. He would not be silenced by the demands of Amaziah. The cry of "conspiracy" did not intimidate him, and the suggestion that the king's house was "off limits" did not impress him. The work would go on.

God sent the prophets to do a necessary work. He wanted the people to hear their words. God would use the expression "*rising up early and sending them*" to point out his desire that their message be thoroughly spread (cf. Jer. 29:19).

**Second, the prophets often foretold punishment that was on the horizon.** Often God would have a prophet speak of horrible calamity ahead if his people refused to repent of their wickedness. Hosea warned the people of God's rejection, and declared that the next generation would suffer the consequences of his generation's sins (Hosea 4:6). Amos predicted that a time was coming when there would be a famine of hearing God's words (Amos 8:11), and called upon Israel to "*prepare to meet thy God*" (Amos 4:12). Isaiah warned of the coming Assyrian Captivity (Isa. 7:17), and Isaiah and Jeremiah told of the Babylonian Captivity for the southern kingdom of Judah (Isa. 39:6; 5:13; Jer. 20:4; 25:9). Indeed, attempting to impress the people with future punishment was an important work of God's servants the prophets.

**Third, the prophets called upon God's people to reform.** God loved his covenant people and wanted them to be as a faithful wife. He longed for her fidelity and gave her time to straighten up her ungodly ways.

*"Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Return unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets cried..."* (Zech. 1:3,4).

This passage also shows that the message of the prophet was not always welcomed. The "fathers" had rejected the "former prophets." The prophet's work was not always appreciated, but it was necessary. Through Isaiah God called upon the people to return (Isa. 44:22), and even to the days of John the baptizer and the Christ, the call for godly reformation went forth. "*He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet*" (Isa. 40:3; John 1:23; cf. Mark 1:4,5).

*"Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and*

*the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel*" (Mark 1:14,15).

And so the prophets, up to the sending of the greatest prophet of all, God's own Son, called upon the people to amend their ways and to look faithfully to the God of heaven.

**Fourth, the prophets spoke of the Christ, the kingdom, of better days and greater privileges ahead.** According to Peter, the prophets spoke of the sufferings of Christ and of the glories which would follow, and they longed to understand the time of the fulfillment of those prophecies (I Peter 1:10-12). Amos predicted that the tabernacle of David which was fallen would be raised up (Amos 9:11). Isaiah declared that in the latter days Jehovah's house would be established on the top of the mountains, and that the word of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4). Jeremiah foretold of the new covenant that God would in time make with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Heb. 8:8ff). Isaiah affirmed that God's people would in time be called by a new name (Isa. 62:2), and Daniel declared that the new kingdom God would set up would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44).

That there is great privilege involved in being a member of the new kingdom is indicated in the words of Christ in Luke 10:24 where we read,

*"for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not."*

When these words were spoken, the kingdom was "at hand." And the Lord pointed out that a member of the new kingdom had greater privilege and advantage than even John the baptizer (Luke 7:24-28). Peter said that the prophets from Samuel on, all of those which spoke, told of the days in which Jesus Christ would be in authority (Acts 3:22-24).

**Fifth, the prophets were badly treated.** "But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not" (Amos 2:12). Jeremiah was placed in a dungeon and he "sank in the mire" (Jer. 38:6). Tradition says that Isaiah was cut in two (cf. Heb. 11:37).

While bewailing Jerusalem the Lord said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto thee..." (Matt. 23:37). And furthermore of that city Jesus said, "...for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33). Historically, it just wouldn't fit the pattern for one of God's prophets to be killed anywhere else! John the baptizer was beheaded (Matt. 14:1-12), and Jesus Christ was crucified (Matt. 27:35). Indeed, wisdom was justified (Matt. 11:13-19).

**Sixth, the prophets did not live forever, but their words were true.** In Zechariah 1:5 we read, "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" And in verse 6 we read, "But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers?" The prophets all died (John 8:53); all of them passed off the earthly scene. The Jews finally did with the forerunner of Christ what they would (Mark 9:13), and Jesus they crucified (Matt. 27:35).

But we now have the word of Christ spoken through his servants the apostles and prophets inspired with his Holy Spirit (John 16:13; I Cor. 2:12,13; II Tim. 3:16,17). We must heed the word of Christ (Acts 3:22) or be cut off from all hope. The words of God's servants the prophets are true.

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# THE PROPHETS

Billy Bland

There was a special group of inspired people in the Old and New Testaments known as “prophets.” It truly is rewarding to study these great men of God. At certain times God would raise up certain men (or women as the case may be) to deliver his message. These men (prophets) might go to an individual, to a king, or even to a nation. In short, they went wherever Jehovah sent them. Among them were also the writing prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. There were also prophets in the New Testament church as we shall later see in this study. Jesus noted the division of the Old Testament as the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.

*“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44).*

At times reference is made today to the “Major and Minor Prophets.” This classification has nothing to do with importance of the content or message. All of God’s word is important, whether it relates to one letter (Gal. 3:16), or to the whole of God’s word (Psalm 119:160; 139:17). The Major and/or Minor Prophets have to do with the size of the book. “Major” referring to books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. “Minor” referring to the shorter books of Hosea through Malachi.

This article will deal with prophets in general.

## DEFINITION

Thayer, page 553, defines the word prophet as

*“an interpreter or spokesman for God; one through whom God speaks...one who speaks by divine inspiration. ... In the N. T. 1. one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, esp. future events, and in particular such as relate to the*

*cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation.”*

W. E. Vine, page 222, defines “prophet” as

*“One who speaks forth or openly, a proclaimer of a divine message, denoted among the Greeks an interpreter of the oracles of the gods.” He goes on to say, “Hence, in general, the prophet was one upon whom the Spirit of God rested, Numb. 11:17-29, one, to whom and through whom God speaks, Numb. 12:2; Amos 3:7,8.”*

The prophets were God’s spokesmen, directed by the Holy Spirit. They were neither to add to, subtract from, nor in any way alter God’s message. They were to faithfully proclaim God’s word.

## THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET

Deuteronomy 18:18-22 describes the **work** and **message** of the prophet. God said to Moses,

*“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”*

The **source** of the prophet’s message was not within himself. His message came from God. In the preceding passage God said that He would “put my words in his mouth....” Again, “...my words which he shall speak in my name....” Likewise, Jeremiah wrote; “Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jer. 1:9). Repeatedly, the prophets

declared the message with a *“thus saith the Lord,”* showing that the message was the Lord’s and not their own. Peter wrote, *“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”* (II Peter 1:20-21).

The **authority** of the prophet’s message is also seen in the Deuteronomic passage. He (the prophet) was to speak in God’s name. He was speaking by God’s authority. This passage in Deuteronomy finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ as is seen in Acts 3:22-23. Jesus Christ came by God’s authority. But the principle of speaking with God’s authority is true with all the true prophets. God expected people to hear this prophet (Jesus Christ) as seen in the following, *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”* (Deut. 18:19).

The **extent or range** of the prophet’s message is also very important. The prophets declared events that would transpire in their own time, but were not limited to such time. Thus the prophet was a “fore-teller” as well as a “forth-teller.” He at times declared events that would transpire hundreds or even thousands of years later. This, of course, is no problem to those that believe in the inspiration of God’s word. If God gave the message, then it was no problem for Isaiah to prophesy that a “virgin” would conceive and bear a Son and that Son’s name be “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:22-23). Isaiah, being inspired by God, could with pin-point accuracy predict the establishment of the Lord’s house in the last days in the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4; Acts 2).

The “higher-critics,” however, have a problem with predictive prophecy. Such is seen in the statement by the late A. B. Davidson. He said, “The prophet is always a man to the people of his own time, and it is always to the people of his own time that he speaks, not to a generation long after nor to us.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, some want to take away such predictions as the previously mentioned prophecy.

The Bible is filled with predictive prophecy. Indeed, one of the greatest evidences of the inspiration of the Bible is its prophecy and fulfillments. Just think of the hundreds of prophecies that find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Isaiah is known as the “Messianic prophet” because he prophesied

of the life of Christ in such detail. Jesus Christ used prophecies relative to himself to prove that he is the Son of God, *“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me”* (Luke 24:44). Philip could take Isaiah chapter 53 and preach Jesus! *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus”* (Acts 8:35).

Peter also shows that the prophets did not always speak with reference to their own time:

*“Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into”* (I Peter 1:9-12).

Note also the following passages relative to predictive prophecy:

*“But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled”* (Acts 3:18). *“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began”* (Acts 3:21). *“Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days”* (Acts 3:24).

The work of the prophet was to take God’s message and deliver it to whomever God desired. It might be Elijah going to wicked Ahab, or Amos prophesying against the sins of northern Israel. It could also be Haggai or Zechariah encouraging God’s people to rebuild the Temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

## NEW TESTAMENT AS WELL AS OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

Prophets were not limited to the period of the Old Testament. We read of prophets in the New Testament church as well. On the day the church was established, we read where Joel's prophecy of the Spirit being poured out upon all flesh starting to be fulfilled. Peter says,

*"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:16-18).*

Other scriptures likewise show there were prophets in the New Testament church: "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar" (Acts 11:27-28). "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul" (Acts 13:1). "And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them" (Acts 15:32). "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (I Cor. 12:28). "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles" (I Cor. 12:29)? "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge" (I Cor. 14:29). "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11).

Also, Philip had four virgin daughters that prophesied.

*"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of*

*Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy" (Acts 21:8-9).*

## FALSE PROPHETS

Not only were there true prophets, but God knew that false prophets would also arise. The penalty for the false prophet was death, "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die" (Deut. 18:20). God gave Israel a way to test a false prophet. He said,

*"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:21-22).*

Sadly, Israel later would be enamored with false prophets. They wanted to hear "smooth things" and demanded such from the prophets. Isaiah wrote, "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:9-10). Also, from Jeremiah we read, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof" (Jer. 5:30-31)? "Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart" (Jer. 14:14). Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15).

Peter said there would arise false teachers and compared them to the false prophets of old, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even

denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (II Peter 2:1). He shows further that they will have a following and clearly declares their motive, their method, as well as their judgement.

*“And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (II Peter 2:2-3).*

One can detect a false prophet by his works.

*“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:16-20).*

We, today, can test the false teacher by the word of God — *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thess. 5:21). “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I John 4:1).*

## CONCLUSION

The Bible has much to say regarding the prophets. They were humble men called of God for a special purpose. It was their responsibility to take God’s message and deliver it unto mortal man. It might be a message of doom because of sin, or it might be a message of hope conditioned upon repentance. Faithful prophets were held in high esteem by God. May each reader of these lines have an appreciation for the great good done by these godly men.

<sup>1</sup>Rex A. Turner, “A Harmony Of The Prophets,” (Unpublished notes) p.1

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stated: *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).* Jesus further had stated concerning the Spirit’s mission: *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come” (John 16:13).*

The inspired apostles, having been baptized in the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4), claimed that the things they wrote were revealed by the Holy Spirit. Paul plainly penned: *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (I Cor. 2:12,13).* Paul is very bold in affirming his inspiration of the Spirit throughout all his epistles (I Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:11,12; Eph. 3:3-5; I Thess. 2:13; I Tim. 4:1; II Tim. 3:16,17).

Similar claims can be shown to have been made by the other New Testament writers (I Peter 1:12; II Peter 1:3; 3:1,2; 3:15; I John 1:5; 4:1-3; Rev. 1:1-5). Thus, the possession of miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were used in revealing God’s Word. Has God’s Word been revealed? The Scriptures clearly state that it has (I Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:7-13; II Tim. 3:16,17; James 1:25; Jude 3). If one purpose of the gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy, was to reveal God’s Word, and God’s Word has been revealed, does this not indicate that these gifts have served their purpose and are no longer needed?

Another purpose of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy, was to confirm the word which had been revealed and thereby authenticate its bearers. Nicodemus clearly understood that Jesus was a messenger from heaven because of the miracles which He worked. This ruler of the Jews said: *“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2).*

Before his ascension to Heaven, Jesus gave the Great Commission to his apostles and then promised that signs would be given to those who

believe the gospel: *"In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover"* (Mark 16:17,18). What was the result of the apostles' being given the Great Commission? *"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and **confirming** (emphasis mine, RR) the word with signs following. Amen"* (Mark 16:20). A parallel passage is Hebrews 2:3,4: *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was **confirmed** (emphasis mine, RR) unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will"* (Heb. 2:3,4). If the purpose of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, including prophecy (I Cor. 12:8-10), was to reveal and confirm God's Word, and God's Word has been revealed and confirmed, what possible reason could exist for these miraculous gifts continuing today?

We have seen that the two-fold purpose of miraculous gifts — to reveal and to confirm God's Word — has been fulfilled. Therefore, there is no longer any need for these miraculous gifts today. But in addition, the Scriptures also plainly indicate that miraculous gifts of the Spirit have ceased because of the manner in which these miraculous gifts were conferred.

We noted earlier that the apostles were baptized in the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). This baptism in the Spirit gave them the ability not only to work miracles (Acts 2:43; 3:6-8; 5:12-16), but also to confer this ability upon others by the laying on of their hands. We do not read of anyone in the early church working miracles except the apostles until the seven are chosen to oversee the distribution of food to the widows. Immediately after we read of the apostles praying and laying hands on them, we learn that one of the seven, Stephen, did great wonders and miracles (Acts 6:6-8). Another of the seven, Philip, went to Samaria to preach Christ and confirmed the spoken words by the miracles which he worked (Acts 8:5-7,13).

Philip, however, could not pass this ability to work miracles on to others. Only the Spirit baptized apostles could do that! Therefore, the apostles at Jerusalem sent Peter and John down to Samaria *"who, when they were come down,*

*prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost...Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 8:14-17). Simon, a sorcerer before obeying the gospel, wanted to buy this power to confer the gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, but was told by Peter, *"Thou has neither part nor lot in this matter"* (Acts 8:18-21).

Another example of miraculous gifts being given by the laying on of an apostle's hands occurred at Ephesus. Paul found twelve disciples who believed in Jesus, but had received John's baptism. After they were baptized in the name of Christ, Paul *"laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied"* (Acts 19:1-7). Other examples of miraculous gifts of the Spirit being given by the laying on of apostles' hands are found in Romans 1:11 and II Tim. 1:6. Indeed, the "laying on of hands" is listed as one of the *"principles of the doctrine of Christ"* in Heb. 6:1,2.

Since the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, including prophecy (I Cor. 12:8-10), were only given by the laying on of the apostles' hands and since there are no living apostles today, it logically follows that miracles have ceased. If miracles have ceased, then prophecy has ceased. Those, therefore, who claim to be prophets today are making a false claim. If prophecy has ceased, there cannot be any more prophets!

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## Who Really Believes In Modern Prophets?

Wayne Coats

There is in Nashville, Tennessee, a place where a number of people meet for some kind of worship. The name of the place is **The Belmont Church**. The head of the Belmont Church is **Don Finto** who is billed as the pastor—apostle. As a funeral director, I recently had a funeral at Belmont and the apostle Don delivered the funeral talk. While in the building, I picked up a number

of tracts, papers and materials which were available to anyone interested.

One such paper was entitled, **“Spiritual Gifts in the Assemblies.”** After stating that, *“We... believe (as expressed in the statement of faith) that spiritual gifts are still given today...”*, the writer stated, *“The use of these gifts, especially prophecy, is intended to ‘strengthen, encourage, and comfort’ believers (I Corinthians 14:3 NIV).”*

Another paper from Belmont states, *“Both men and women are to prophesy (speak as the Spirit gives them words).”*

Time and space in this article forbid a detailed exposure of the silly claims of the apostle Don, but much more material and answers are set forth in a booklet which I have written under the title, **I Heard an Apostle Speak.**

In setting forth *“guidelines for gifts in the public assemblies,”* Finto has really thrown up a protective wall around his plans. He says:

*“Generally speaking the public use of gifts should be limited to persons who are known or are committed to fellowship and have proved a willingness to be submitted to judgement and authority.”*

That says unless you are one of us, you cannot prophesy to us. Wonder why? We all know. These racketeers make sure that their front and rear guards are protected, but then Finto states that the prophets can only be such as have been willing to kowtow, be boot-lickers, submit to judgement and authority. Ah, but that means you prophets will do what I say, when I say and how I say.

The apostle says:

*“Authority for discerning whether a word is from the Lord will be in the hands of the pastor and elders in charge of the assembly.”*

A prophet can claim to have a word from the Lord but the pastor will decide. If the word is from the Lord, why is there a need for some pastor to decide about the matter? We all know before the New Testament was complete, there were matters decided by the inspired apostles. Someone had to decide about that which was truth and they did decide (John 16:13). We have the word of God in complete and final form (Jude 3). There is no need for some little godlet to set himself up as one

who determines all about supernatural revelations from God.

Can you imagine the temerity (audacity) of a man who says, *“We realize that we, too, may err, but we believe the responsibility has been placed in our hands by the Lord.”* Now that says that a person could sincerely claim to have a word from the Lord but after putting that person on trial, “we” could “err” and decide that the word was not from the Lord. One thinks it is, but others think it isn’t. Wonder how many get to pass the test and testify?

Notice further:

*“If you believe you have a word from the Lord we would ask that you either come forward to one of the elders in the assembly or, with great care toward the discernment of the timing, speak in the assembly with a willingness for the word to be judged after it has been brought.”*

Please note the protective cover of that group of specious, showy prophets. That protection means that one can claim to have a word from God but an elder must decide, mediate, and pass on the matter. God is trying so hard to say something but the elder makes him wait. “Timing” is of such importance. Oh, yes, God can wait until his time comes to speak. The speaker has the word but he has been given the lockjaw. God has put something in the prophet but that something cannot come out until the judges give approval. If that isn’t bizarre enough, please note that the prophet who has a word from the Lord **must** *“speak in the assembly with a willingness for the word to be judged after it has been brought.”* Isn’t it a shame that stupidity isn’t painful?

The word from the Lord is not really the Lord’s word until the word has been judged, *“...after it has been brought.”* Looks like at Belmont the word-giver is screened before and put on trial afterwards. T’would be interesting to know how many prophets flunk the tests.

The apostle Don says:

*“We believe that our sisters in the Lord may move into gifting...but also in speaking to minister to both men and women as God calls them, (please note) — as long as they are women who are submitting to God’s channel of authority/leadership both at home and in the church.”*

Even a stark-naked-fool should know that if and when God calls a woman to exercise the gift of supernatural speaking to men and women in the assembly, he would not call a woman who rejected *“authority/leadership both at home and in the church.”*

The foregoing is but a brief sampling of the ridiculous foolishness which is being brewed, served and sent out from Nashville. Truly, the half has not yet been told and do you know who swallows such damnable heresies? Nashville is running over with such diners, and I will stand hitched before one or all of them to defend the truth.

It is clear that even at Belmont, where prophets are supposedly operating, their claims are not actually believed by Don Finto. He refuses to accept their word about having a word from God. Why is he so skeptical? He knows, as well as I or anyone else, that God is not spouting forth anything through anyone at Belmont or anywhere else. We would respectfully ask Don to put up or shut up.

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he spoke to men through prophets but now he speaks through Jesus Christ his Son (Heb. 1:1-2) and the revelation of his divine word (John 12:48). At one time he required animal sacrifices (Exodus 20:24) but now he requires each Christian to be a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2). At one time God allowed men to perform miracles (Matt. 10:1) but it is not allowed today (I Cor. 13:8-10). Yes, God is the same yesterday, today and forever, but his laws and requirements have changed!

We are told in Mark 16:20 that miracles were for the purpose of *“confirming the word.”* While the New Testament was in the process of being given it was “confirmed” as genuine and true by *“signs and wonders and divers miracles”* (Heb. 13:3-4). Revelation (the New Testament) was being given in “parts” and when all the “parts” had been delivered and confirmed, the completed (perfect) New Testament was finished. Therefore, the miracles needed to validate the giving of the Word were no longer needed. There is something greater and more lasting than miraculous gifts, that is “love.” This is the argument the apostle Paul makes by inspiration in I Corinthians chapters 12-14.

In I Corinthians 13:8-11 we read,

*“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”*

According to verse 11, miraculous gifts were “childish things.” A baby needs a rattle but when he is grown the rattle is discarded. While the church was in its infancy it needed miracles, but when the giving of the New Testament was completed by the end of the first century, miracles and prophecy were no longer needed and therefore done away.

Those who contend for miracles and prophecy today still desire the baby things the Lord put away 1,900 years ago!



## Questions & Answers

Garland M. Robinson

### SINCE GOD IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER. WHY DON'T YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES AND PROPHECY?

Hebrews 13:8 says, *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”* God’s deity, nature, character and personality never change *“for there is no respect of persons with God”* (Rom. 2:11). However, God has dealt with men differently at various times in history under different laws. For example: at one time God created man from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7), but he does not make man that way today. At one time

# HAS PROPHECY CEASED?

Rod Rutherford

The miraculous gift of prophecy is claimed by many in our time. Self-appointed prognosticators, such as the popular Jean Dixon, regularly make forecasts of the future. Those in the Pentecostal Movement claim that the gift of prophecy is still available to believers today, along with the other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit which are mentioned in the New Testament (I Cor. 12:8-10).

That the gift of prophecy was possessed by both men and women in the Old and New Testaments will be readily admitted by all who believe the Bible (Gen. 20:6; Exodus 15:20; Deut. 18:20-22; Acts 2:17; 11:28; 13:1; 15:43; 21:9; I Cor. 11:28; Eph. 2:11; I Peter 1:10,11; II Peter 1:19-21). That fulfilled prophecy constitutes one of the strongest proofs of the inspiration of the Word of God and the divinity of Jesus Christ has long been acknowledged by Bible students. But that the miraculous gift of prophecy has ceased is disputed by many in our day.

Has prophecy ceased, or does God continue to give this miraculous gift to men today? In order to answer this question, we shall go to the inspired New Testament. We shall ask two questions:

- 1) "What was the purpose of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, including prophecy?"
- 2) "How were these gifts given?"

The answer to these two questions will clearly provide the answer to the question, "Has prophecy ceased?"

First, what was the purpose of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit? A careful study of the New Testament shows that the miraculous gifts, such as prophecy, healing, etc., had a two-fold purpose: (1) To reveal God's Word. (2) To confirm the revealed Word and thereby authenticate God's inspired messengers.

The miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on Pentecost day was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21). Jesus, in promising the coming of the Holy Spirit to the apostles had referred to him as the "Spirit of truth" (John 14:17) indicating the revelatory work of the Spirit. He also had

(Continued on page 8, CEASED)

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