

The Prophetic Nature of the Church

by Pastor Mike Osminski

- I) Old Testament (structure and pattern)
 - 1) function of the prophet
 - a) prophets prophesy the word of the Lord (1 Kings 13:1, 2).
 - b) prophets interpret history according to Scripture (Daniel 9:2).
 - c) prophets evaluate the correct use or abuse of power (1 Samuel 9:9 & 10:1): the relationship of prophets to the kings Saul, David, Solomon, and the kings of the divided kingdom illustrates the purpose of the office of the prophet is to submit kingly authority to the word of God; prophetic activity also multiplies during the divided kingdom. See also 1 Samuel 7:15-17.
 - 2) the prophet's message
 - a) the Lord is active in the history of His people in terms of judgment or mercy.
 - b) have the people of God been faithful to the Lord's purposes or not?
 - c) exile comes with disobedience (law function), but there is a forgiving gracious dimension that establishes God's purposes and creates hope (Gospel function) (Jeremiah 29:4-14; 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-38).
Jeremiah describes this process of grace whereby the Lord transforms the hearts of His people in Jeremiah 17:1; 24:7; and 31:33
This Gospel function is demonstrated in Psalm 90:13-15 when Moses gets the LORD to "change His mind." (Exodus 32:12,14 and Deuteronomy 32:28-36). The Hebrew word NACHAM means God was "sorry" for what He planned to do and thus "changed His mind." Moses accomplished this by prophetic intercession (Psalm 90: superscription & Psalm 106:23). See also the intercession of the prophet Daniel in Daniel 9:3,17 as an example of changes enacted by prophetic intercession.
 - d) the gracious promise of Nathan for David supercedes the promise of judgment for Saul (2 Samuel 7:4-17; see also 2 Kings 17:13)
 - 3) the word of the Lord
 - a) the word of the Lord, not human activity, determines history (Isaiah 55:8-13).
 - b) Solomon hears the word of the Lord directly on four occasions during his reign (1 Kings 1:1-11:43), but after this in the divided kingdom, prophets begin to bring the word to the kings in great frequency. Prophets are greatly needed in times of division among God's people.
 - 4) the prophet's life as a sign
 - a) the prophet's life and not just his/her message becomes a sign; the prophet's life is a prophetic parable "the medium has become the message" (Isaiah 8:18; Hosea 1:2-11; 3:1-5; Ezekiel 24:15-27; 12:1-11 [an example of "prophetic drama"]). See also Ezekiel 2:8-3:3 (Numbers 5:11-31; Rev 10:9, 10).
 - b) the suffering of prophets as messengers of Yahweh is a familiar theme in the Hebrew Scriptures; "the pain that Hosea experienced caused him to understand his marital relationship in terms of Yahweh's relationship with Israel" (David Stacey).
 - c) the Lord speaks directly to the prophet who is "faithful," not simply through supernatural manifestations. In Numbers 12:1-16, the Lord contrasts the prophetic office of one who seeks to do the will of the Lord as opposed to one whose gifting revolves around spiritual giftings.
- II) New Testament (the prophetic function of the church)

- 1) the New Testament is characterized by prophetic teams; in the Old Testament one man was raised up to address the nation; Jesus is the one man who has been raised up by the Lord, so there is no more need for this OT pattern to continue.
- 2) prophets work in teams in the NT; five-fold ministry as a means of maturing the church illustrates that it takes a team to bring about the fullness of Christ (Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 1 Corinthians 14:29, 32; Revelation 11:3,10; Ephesians 4:7-16).
- 3) the church has a prophetic dimension as the body of Christ; the church also possesses apostolic, pastoral, teaching, and evangelistic dimensions that are resident in the body of Christ; these dimensions, imparted to the church by the Spirit, create the aspects of the gift of Christ in five-fold ministry; the New Testament is Christ-centered and church-centered, never man-centered (see Romans 16:26).

GIFTINGS	MINISTRY	CORPORATE DIMENSION
"charismas"	"diakonias"	"energeemas" (1 Cor 12:4-6)
prophecy	prophet	prophetic
evangelism	evangelist	evangelistic
shepherding	pastor	pastoral
apostolic team	apostle	apostolic
sharing the word	teacher	teaching

- 4) there are several factors involved on the part of a prophet in hearing the voice of the Lord and discerning true prophecy from false prophecy: John 5:19-20,30; 7:16-18; Matthew 7:21-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

III) Revelation (pattern for the future of church history)

- 1) the book of Revelation is called a "prophecy"; therefore it provides the pattern for prophetic & apostolic ministry for the entire existence of the church in history (Rev 1:3; 18:20, 24; 19:10; 22:6-7, 9-10, 18-19).
- 2) there are three aspects of apostolic commissioning/types of apostles in the NT:
 - a) historical/post-resurrection apostles (1 Corinthians 15:1-7; Revelation 21:14).
 - b) post-ascension apostles (1 Corinthians 9:1,2; 15:8-11; Acts 9:1-19; 22:4-16; 26:12-19; Acts 13:1 with Acts 14:4, 14).
 - c) Revelation 1 apostles (Revelation 1:9-20); see also Rev 2:2; 18:20.
- 3) in Revelation 1, Jesus appears to John during a time of persecution, great trouble, and confusion, and commissions both apostles and prophets to bear witness to Christ, be faithful to the word, to prophesy to and evaluate the churches so they might persevere, to walk in heavenly worship and revelation, and to overcome political, religious, and cultural hindrances to the preaching of the Gospel and the testimony of Jesus. Thus it shall be until the return of Christ.
- 4) Jesus is "hidden" in the OT, and the function of the NT spirit of prophecy is to reveal Jesus (Luke 24:15-16,21-27,30-31). But Jesus can also be hidden in the NT. This is why the book Revelation is an "unveiling" of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:1). The prophetic function of the church is to "find" where Jesus is hidden and reveal Him in His presence, power, and glory.
- 5) there are five words used throughout the book of Revelation that provide an outline to the apostolic and prophetic move that the unveiling of Jesus in Revelation 1 sets in motion:
 - a) "apostles" in Revelation 2:2; 18:20; 21:14

- b) "to be sent on an apostolic mission" in Revelation 1:1; 5:6; 22:6
- c) "prophet" in Revelation 2:20; 10:7; 11:10,18; 16:6; 18:20,24; 22:6,9
- d) "to prophesy" in Revelation 10:11; 11:3
- e) "prophecy" in Revelation 1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7,10,18,19.

IV) False Prophecy

- 1) False prophecy in Scripture is called the unclean spirit (Zechariah 13:2-6) or a spirit of impurity. Uncleaness is what separates God from His people and His people from each other.
- 2) Unclean spirits were one category of spirits that Jesus drove out during His earthly ministry (Matt 12:43-45; Mark 1:23-27; 3:11,30; 5:2; 6:7; 7:25; 9:25; Luke 4:33,36; 6:18; Acts 5:16; 8:7; Rev 16:13; 18:2).
- 3) False prophets, false teachers, and false apostles are equated with each other as the spirit of falsehood that they bring creates an environment or ethos of deception to separate people from the Lord and His truth (2 Peter 2:1; Revelation 2:2; 2:20; 16:13). See 2 Timothy 4:1-4.
- 4) False prophecy is a false narrative (2 Corinthians 10:4-6); true prophecy counters the false narrative with the true narrative of the Gospel, the centrality of Jesus the Messiah, and a kingdom-establishing perspective (Matthew 24:14 & Matthew 16:17 and 23). See Revelation 13:16-18 & 14:1 and compare Rev 3:12 & 19:13,16. The name of God begins the book of Revelation in Rev 1:4 (see Exodus 3:14). As "the One Who is to Come," God the Father defines His own future not in terms of an infinite extension of existence, but in terms of His coming to deliver His people.
- 5) other aspects of false prophecy from the OT are Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (see Jeremiah 28:16 & 29:32 in which the Hebrew word SARA meaning "rebellion/falsehood" is used); Jeremiah 23:16; 14:11-16; 25:3-7; 1 Kings 22:14-28; Lamentations 2:14; Isaiah 8:11-22.
- 6) False prophecy creates
 - a) guilt = rebellion
 - b) fear = faint of heart
 - c) anger = mental illness SEE Isaiah 1:5
- 7) False prophecy creates sectarianism (see Romans chapter 14 for a Biblical definition of how sectarianism originates). Sectarianism as a phenomenon in the church is described in 1 Corinthians 11:18,19 and is rooted in the factionalism of 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. False prophecy is enhanced by the impulse of fantasy (2 Corinthians 11:4,13,26; Matthew 24:24).
- 8) Zechariah 13:2 links the power of false prophecy to idolatry (Jeremiah 5:21, 31 & Psalm 115:4-8).
The effects of idolatry in this present hour in the church are seen in
 - a) houses built on sand instead of rock (Matthew 7:24-27)
 - b) wood, hay, stubble built on the correct foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)
 - c) pride that masquerades as confidence or faith (Proverbs 16:18; 18:12; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Galatians 5:6).