

Prophecy

Paul valued the gift of prophecy more highly than any other gift, except that of Apostle (1 Cor 14:1).

Prophets were another foundation gift given by the ascended Christ to the Church. The gift of prophecy is distributed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:11). One refers to an office; the other to an edifying gift.

The Greek verb “propheteo” means to forthtell, to speak out concerning divine things. The noun “prophetes” refers to one who has insight into divine things and who speaks them forth to others. The idea of foretelling (prediction) is secondary and incidental.

The essence of the prophetic gift was the reception of direct revelation from God (1 Cor 14:29-31). The common element was that the Holy Spirit was directly guiding His people through prophets prior to the completion of the NT Scriptures. The prophets brought “edification,” “exhortation,” and “consolation” to the church (1 Cor 14:3) and conviction and repentance to unbelievers (1 Cor 14:24-25). Prophecy is spirit inspired utterance dealing with present needs. Thus the prophets guided, directed, taught, edified, exhorted, consoled the believers in the absence of the sacred cannon of NT Scriptures.

In the NT predictive prophecy occurs in seven cases as that of Agabus when he predicted a famine (Acts 11:27) and troubles for Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10, 11). However, the prediction of future events was secondary and coincidental. Forth telling rather than foretelling was the substance of prophetic gift.

“The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor 14:32).

“Let the prophets speak two or three and let the others judge” (1 Cor 14:29).

Prophesyings were not to be despised (1 Thes 5:20) but their utterances were to be carefully judged (1 Jn 4:1; Rev 2:2). When the NT was completed the office of prophet ceased. It was no longer needed. Our appeal now is to the inspired, written Word, not to man. There are no more revelations to be added to the sacred Scriptures of truth.

In a secondary sense of the word prophet we do have those who exercise the prophetic ministry of proclaiming God’s written Word in a manner which edifies, exhorts and gives direction to believers. Those who bring the right Word for the occasion.