

Prophets in the New Testament

Messengers Series Part 4

In Greek writings, the interpreters of oracles, messages from the gods, and other hidden things are all called Προφήτης, which translates to prophets. A writer of poetry is also called a prophet because of the "inspiration" required to compose the poem. It is reasonable to believe God picked this word to describe the ones used to carry the words of Jesus that He spoke and sent through men by the Holy Spirit. This Greek word prophētēs, transliterated into English, identifies the process of word by word inspiration, which caused the gospel to spread and the Bible to be written. It applies to both the Old and New Testament prophets.

The Holy Spirit described both the prophet and the message for us. *"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for **no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God**"* (2 Peter 1:20-21). A.T. Robertson says of this passage, "the man is not a self-starter." The prophet did not know what he would say until it was spoken through his mouth by the Spirit. Remember what Jesus told the disciples. *"And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense, or what you should say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say"* (Luke 12:11-12).

John The Baptist is unique among all men. John's presence was prophesied in Isaiah 40:1-5. He was a prophet, called by God, to announce that the Messiah and the Kingdom were at hand. As the herald of the King of Kings, John delivered a message the ages had longed to hear, *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29)

The Messiah Jesus is also unique. Born of a woman but begotten by God, He was The Prophet, foretold by God through Moses. *"I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him"* (Deuteronomy 18:18-19). Jesus states that He has the words of life given by the Father in John 6:22-69; 8:12-59. The proof was in His resurrection from death (Acts 2:22-24; 17:30-31).

Many New Testament Prophets. Today, many people try to force a requirement of foretelling future events on a prophet. The examples of New Testament prophets telling of future events are rare. These prophets spoke and wrote only what the Holy Spirit revealed to them. From Acts chapter two to the Book of Revelation, the Gospel plan of salvation, and how to live it, are explained by Christ's chosen prophets. The apostle John saw visions of the future and recorded them in the book of Revelation. But all of Jesus' apostles and other inspired men spoke as they received the words to say until all of the gospel had been revealed and written down. The apostles did not have a script, and probably no notes, for the first sermon, delivered on Pentecost and recorded in Acts 2. As the word spread, many languages and dialects were heard and understood by the people. The indication is that the Spirit influenced not only the speech of the apostles but also the words heard by the audience.

Notice also the way Paul tells of the things he taught. *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words"* (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). The Holy Spirit did not give the prophet an idea or feeling, but the exact words and context needed by the listener to understand the mind of Christ.

New Testament prophesy delivered the complete word of God, through His Son, and verified accurate by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you"* (John 14:26). *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come"* (John 16:13). And when the full gospel of Christ and the plan of salvation had been delivered, Paul said, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'but the righteous man shall live by faith'"* (Romans 1:16-17).