

Prophecy - Speaking the Word of God

Messengers Series Part 5

At first glance, one word may seem to have two different spellings in the following passage. *"Love never fails; but if there are gifts of **prophecy**, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we **prophesy** in part"* (1 Corinthians 13:8-9). The religious world often uses the first spelling for both words in their books and pamphlets. Even the two spell checkers on the computer try to change prophecy (prophe-sigh) to prophecy (prophe-see). Therefore, we turn to Doctor Thayer to determine the meaning of each word.

Prophecy is the Greek noun προφητεία, prophēteia. It specifies "a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden, especially by foretelling future events." (What the prophet says or writes).

Prophecy is the Greek verb προφητεύω, prophēteuō. It specifies "someone who is a prophet, or to speak forth by divine inspirations, to predict." In fewer words, The Prophet, prophesies (the action verb) prophecies (noun, the thing revealed).

We see the prophets prophesying their prophecies throughout the New Testament. At the end of Acts 1, the twelve apostles are together. They are still together in Acts 2. *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance"* (Acts 2:4). Even without the noun or verb present, we know the apostles became the prophets who prophesied for Christ beginning with this verse. They started a task that would occupy the rest of their lives. Jesus told them that they *"shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

In Acts 6:5-7, we see the apostles begin to delegate the work to faithful men. The miraculous ability to prophecy provided by the Holy Spirit, given to men by the apostle's hands, allowed more men to preach the gospel, Acts 8:17. Although the words are omitted here also, you can see by the actions of Stephen and Philip as they preached the word, that they were prophets. Stephen by the sermon he delivered and the vision he described in Acts 7. Philip, by his preaching and being directed to people and places by the Spirit, in Acts 8.

In his first letters to the Corinthians, Paul points out the importance of the prophet to prophecy. *"I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues"* (1 Corinthians 14:5). The most important thing in the early church was for the whole truth to be taught. Because the New Testament, as we have it today was not yet written, there was a great need in the first-century church for men, directed by the Spirit, to preach. Again, those that prophesied were prophets. They spoke the gospel with help from the Holy Spirit, who ensured the preaching of the whole truth.

We can follow the inspiration of men by the Holy Spirit from Christ, to the apostles, to the men the apostles laid hands on. By the time these men died, the texts that make up our New Testament were in circulation. With the word of Christ written and distributed, the need for prophets ended. Paul said they would end *"gifts of **prophecy**, they will be done away"* (1 Corinthians 13:8). Paul stated the

reason this way. *"For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away"* (1 Corinthians 13:9-10). Each prophet only received a small portion of the message to deliver verbally. But the Gospel of Christ, written down by different men and assembled, contained the perfect or complete will of God through Christ.

Now, let us go back and look at Hebrews 13:2, (see the previous article ["Introduction to Messengers"](#)). If we place a literal translation for *aggelos* into this verse, we have *"some have entertained **messengers** without knowing it."* Since there is no modifier to indicate the messenger is a member of the heavenly host, there is no reason to use a reference to such in this passage. Philip, an inspired evangelist, preached in Samaria and performed signs that confirmed that he carried Christ's message. He was next sent to Gaza by "an angel of the Lord" (Acts 8:26). The messenger from heaven did not teach the Ethiopian but sent a human messenger to teach. The Ethiopian did not know Philip but invited a stranger into his vehicle, and thereby entertained a messenger who taught him about Jesus.

Jesus commanded people to spread the gospel in the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19-10. Christ sent people as his messengers, to do the work. People preach and teach the gospel. Other people hear and believe. Those that believe call on the name, the authority of Jesus as they obey. They obey first in baptism, and continue throughout their lives as His servants, and become messengers to still others.

Are you a messenger of and for Christ?