

## Message #45

## I Corinthians 12:8-11

## “The Gift of Prophecy”

There were certain spiritual gifts that God gave to the church which were gifts designed to continue through the entire Church Age. There were other gifts specifically designed for the Apostolic Age, which would pass off the scene and one of those gifts, as we shall see today, was the gift of prophecy.

**A DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL GIFT IS GIVEN TO EVERY BELIEVER BY THE SAME SPIRIT OF GOD THAT EVERY BELIEVER MIGHT PROFIT THE PROGRAM OF GOD; BUT IN ORDER FOR A BELIEVER TO DISCOVER HIS OWN GIFT, HE MUST KNOW AS MUCH INFORMATION POSSIBLE ABOUT EACH GIFT.**

Because God does not want us to be “unaware” (12:1) of the subject of spiritual gifts, it is imperative that we study each one and learn as much as we can concerning each one.

**QUESTION #1** – What is a prophet?

In both the O.T. and N.T., a prophet was one who received direct revelation from God. The common denominator among all Biblical prophets was they received direct revelation from God. G. Abbott-Smith, the esteemed Greek lexicographer said the primary meaning of prophecy was the “telling forth divine counsels.” In fact, he states that the noun “prophet” specifically means to receive and communicate the will, the purpose and the counsel of God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 390).

It is very clear from I Corinthians that the Apostle Paul clearly connected the gift of prophecy with receiving direct revelation from God (I Cor. 14:29-32). It is also very clear that the Apostle Peter clearly saw the gift of prophecy as one who received direct revelation from God and spoke from God (II Pet. 1:20-21).

An accurate definition of the gift of prophecy would be one who supernaturally received direct revelation from God and who communicated that revelation, which included God’s will, purpose and counsel.

**QUESTION #2** – How important was the gift of prophecy?

**Importance 1** - It was ranked by God as the number two gift, after the gift of apostle (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

**Importance 2** - It revealed similar revelation for the Church Age like an apostle (Eph. 3:5).

**Importance 3** - It was a gift specifically listed in three of the key gift passages (Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:11).

**Importance 4** - It was a gift far greater than tongues (I Cor. 14:5).

**Importance 5** - It was a gift that had God-ordained guidelines (I Cor. 14:29-32).

**Importance 6** - It was a gift that had God-ordered warnings (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Matt. 7:15; I John 4:1-3).

**QUESTION #3 – What type of information did a N.T. prophet reveal?**

When a N.T. prophet revealed the information he received from God, his information was at best partial (I Cor. 13:9). Each bit of information that God revealed through a prophet was inspired, imperative and immediate, but each was an ingredient that was a significant part of the whole N.T. revelatory picture.

**Type 1** - N.T. prophets were able to reveal the selection of Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for sacred ministry and service (Acts 13:1-4).

**Type 2** - N.T. prophets were able to reveal profitable revelation to the church (I Cor. 14:6).

**Type 3** - N.T. prophets were able to reveal instructive revelation to the church (I Cor. 14:31a).

**Type 4** - N.T. prophets were able to reveal exhortative revelation to the church (I Cor. 14:31).

**Type 5** - N.T. prophets were able to reveal Christ's universal work to the church (Eph. 2:19-20).

**Type 6** - N.T. prophets were able to reveal Christ's international work to the church (Eph. 3:5-12).

**Type 7** - N.T. prophets were able to reveal written revelation to the church (II Pet. 1:20-21).

**Type 8** - N.T. prophets were able to reveal futuristic revelation to the church (Rev. 1:1, 3).

**QUESTION #4 – Who had the gift of prophecy?**

**Group 1** - We know that apostles received direct revelation from God and therefore could certainly function as a prophet (I Cor. 14:10; II Peter 1:20-21; Rev. 1:1, 3). An apostle was a higher ranked gift than a prophet, but an apostle could function as a prophet (I Cor. 12:28).

**Group 2** - We know that certain leaders in a church were N.T. prophets (Acts 13:1).

**Group 3** - We know that certain men in the church could have the gift of prophecy (I Cor. 11:4).

**Group 4** - We know that certain women in the church could have the gift of prophecy, specifically unmarried virgins (Acts 21:9; I Cor. 11:5; 14:34-37).

**QUESTION #5 – What were the purposes of the gift of prophecy?**

**Purpose #1** - To reveal inspired revelation to God's people (I Cor. 2:10; Eph. 3:3-5).

**Purpose #2** - To reveal inspired revelation to edify God's people (I Cor. 14:3a).

**Purpose #3** - To reveal inspired revelation to exhort God's people (I Cor. 14:3b).

**Purpose #4** - To reveal inspired revelation to console God's people (I Cor. 14:3c).

**Purpose #5** - To reveal that God was still giving His Word to believers (I Cor. 14:22).

**Purpose #6** - To give instruction to the believer (I Cor. 14:31).

God's Word is ALWAYS given to instruct the believer so he might "learn" what to believe and how to behave.

**QUESTION #6** – How was the gift of prophecy viewed by the early church?

When the gift of prophecy was operative during the early church days, it was “despised” (I Thess. 5:20).

That word “despise” means that it was a gift that was treated with contempt and it was considered as nothing. Clearly setting forth the truth of God has never been a popular type of ministry. If one does flashy things, he will impress people but one who simply communicates the revelation of God will more than likely be despised.

**QUESTION #7**– How long was the gift of prophecy operative?

There can be absolutely no doubt from the clear testimony of I Cor. 13:8 that prophecy was a temporal gift that would be “done away.” God clearly states in this verse that prophetic revelations would cease. We know prophecy was a gift fully operative when Paul wrote I Thessalonians (A.D. 51-52) and I Corinthians (A.D. 56). We know prophecy was a gift fully operative when Paul wrote Romans (A.D. 57-58) and Ephesians (A.D. 60).

**Text #1** - Ephesians 2:20

Clearly from this text both apostles and prophets are said to be foundational gifts to the building of the church (2:21-22). We can legitimately conclude from this verse that once the church structure began to grow and take shape, the foundational gifts like apostle and prophecy would cease.

**Text #2** - I Corinthians 13:10

It is clearly stated from this verse that prophecy will be done away “when the perfect comes.” We will demonstrate in the studies to come that this definitely has to do with the completion of Scripture. The word “perfect” literally means complete or finished or mature (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 442).

**Text #3** - II Peter 1:19-21

The Apostle Peter clearly equated the more sure prophetic Word with the prophetic Scriptures (1:20). In his mind, God’s written revelation was the highest form of revelation.

**Text #4** - Revelation 22:18-19

John warns that no prophetic revelation was to be added after the completion of the final book in the Bible, Revelation. The gift of prophecy was a foundational gift needed to reveal God’s Word and will prior to His written revelation. However, God’s Word and will are now fully revealed in His Word. His program, His will and His plan are completely contained in His 66 books which comprise our Bibles; it is all in writing.

**QUESTION #8–** Is a preacher or teacher of God’s Word a prophet?

Powerful proclamation of God’s Word IS NOT the same as prophetic revelation from God.

In every instance in the Bible, a prophet received direct revelation from God and no pastor, teacher, or evangelist today receives direct revelation from God.

A preacher proclaims God’s written Word. A teacher teaches God’s written Word. A prophet received God’s inspired revelation. Preachers and teachers interpret and proclaim what God has already revealed in writing.

A prophet received direct revelation from God. There are no prophets today except false prophets. John said, “Many false prophets have gone out into the world” (I John 4:1).

Anyone who claims he is a prophet or who claims they have the gift of prophecy is either ignorant, arrogant or false. Regardless of the motive, this one is heading to the severe judgment of God.

We are all heading to the judgment of God. When the apostles and prophets were here on earth, they laid a foundation which said Jesus Christ is the ONLY way to having a relationship with God. Do you have a relationship with God? Are you heading to everlasting life or everlasting condemnation?