



32. The Gift of Prophecy: A Modern Miracle Revealed

Most Christian churches have believed that the gift of prophecy ceased with the death of the twelve apostles of Jesus. The New Testament is the last of God's revelations to man, they say.

But now a change has come. Millions of members of various churches have wondered about modern prophets and their prophecies. Every time some modern "prophet" makes a prediction that turns out right people wonder, "Has God restored the gift of prophecy to the Christian church again?"

"For decades, the claims of Mary Baker Eddy as a prophetess have been advocated by some, while others have maintained that Joseph Smith was a true prophet. Side by side with this tremendous modern interest in prophecies comes a revival of ancient astrology. People everywhere are looking for a link with the supernatural. Astrology and the screaming tabloid magazines have seemed to supply what is wanted.

We shall study first of all what the Bible says about the gift of prophecy--is it indeed a gift that ended with the apostles, or is it a gift that God will restore to us in the last days? Then we shall study how we may distinguish between a true prophet and a false prophet. Finally we shall consider how important this gift is, and how our eternal salvation depends on correctly relating ourselves to a true prophetic message that God sends.

Does the Lord Give the True Gift of Prophecy in These Last Days?

1. When Christ went to heaven after His resurrection, what different spiritual gifts did He give to His church? Ephesians 4:8, 11.

ANSWER: "He gave some, _____; and some, _____; and some, _____; and some, _____ and teachers."

2. What were the three reasons why He gave us these gifts? Ephesians 4:12.

ANSWER: (a) "For the _____ of the saints, (b) for the _____ of the _____, (c) for the _____ of the _____ of _____."

3. How long should these gifts remain in the church? Ephesians 4:13-15.

ANSWER: "Till we all come in the _____ of the _____, and of the _____ of the _____ of _____, unto a _____, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ ... [and] speaking the truth in _____, may grow up into Him in _____."

All Christians agree that the gifts of evangelists, pastors, teachers, and missionaries are necessary until the coming of the Lord. Why not also the gift of prophets? The text says that these gifts are needed until "we all come in the unity of the faith ... unto a perfect man." We're certainly not there yet! The church still needs these gifts, including the gift of prophecy.

4. Read what Paul says about the Lord's people down in the end of time, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 1:4-8. What special gift will be confirmed or manifested among them?

ANSWER: "The testimony of _____ was confirmed in you."

5. What is this "testimony of Christ," according to the Bible? Revelation 19:10.

ANSWER: "The testimony of Jesus is the _____ of _____."

6. Now read Revelation 12:17 where John speaks of the true church as "the woman." What two clear characteristics mark this true church?

ANSWER: (a) "[They] keep the _____ of _____ and (b) have the _____ of _____."

If you are not as yet acquainted with the precious gift of prophecy, you have a blessing in store! The Lord never gives a gift unless He knows that we need it. If He says that this gift is necessary for you to be "blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," you should waste no time in becoming acquainted with it. It brings us into "the unity of the faith."

How to Distinguish a True Prophet from a False Prophet

7. Read again what the Lord says about His gifts of the Spirit in Ephesians 4:11, 12, 16. Do you see the expression, "edifying," and to "grow up"? To "edify" means to "build up" (an edifice is a building). What does a true prophet do for the church, build it up or tear it to pieces? Now read Matthew 7:15-20, and answer: Does a true prophet [underline the correct answer]:

(a) Tear down or scatter the flock like a wolf; does he bear thorns, and produce thistles? --OR--

(b) Does he build up the church, strengthen the ministry, and bring Christ's followers into unity?

8. What test must be applied to a prophet's teaching and work? Isaiah 8:19, 20.

ANSWER: "To the _____ and to the _____: if they speak not according to this _____, it is because there is _____ in them."

One must apply the same acid test as he does to the true church (see Study Guide 33, "Does the Bible Pinpoint the True Church?"). If a so-called prophet denies even one clear Bible teaching, he cannot be a true prophet.

For example, many modern "prophets" believe in communication with the dead. Ruth Montgomery claimed that the dead Arthur Ford, who had led Bishop Pike astray and who died in 1971, had "written" a book through her. According to Isaiah 8:19, 20, this is clear evidence that "there is no light" in her so-called prophetic revelations.

9. What can we expect to see many of in these last days? Matthew 24:24.

ANSWER: "For there shall arise ... _____ prophets, [which] shall shew _____ and _____; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall _____ the very elect."

10. If someone tried to deceive you with a counterfeit \$20 bill, would you ever after reject all genuine \$20 bills?

YOUR ANSWER: _____. (The existence of counterfeits proves that somewhere there is the genuine.)

The Miracle of the Genuine Gift of Prophecy in the Last Days

The time has at last come when a true prophet is being recognized publicly. You may have noticed in these lessons quotations from several helpful books such as Happiness Digest, The Desire of Ages, and The Ministry of Healing. These were written by Ellen G. White, who was called to the work of a prophet in 1844, the time when the 2300-year prophecy of Daniel 8:14 met its final fulfillment.

Until her death at 87 in 1915, this messenger of God did the work and bore the fruits of genuineness. Never did her teachings vary from the acid test of Holy Scripture. Her last words uttered in a large public meeting were: "I commend to you this Book [the Bible]." Her life and writings "edified" (built up) the church, strengthened the ministry, glorified Christ, led to the "perfecting of the saints." Millions testify to the value of her writings in leading them closer to the Lord. Also a vast worldwide movement embracing schools, hospitals, universities, publishing houses, and even a medical school, are the direct fruit of her life of service and her revelations from the Lord. If we apply Jesus' test to her, "By their fruits ye shall know them," we find abundant evidence that her call was indeed a genuine one. But you need not take anyone's word for it. You can taste and see for yourself--read Happiness Digest, The Desire of Ages, The Great Controversy, The Ministry of Healing, Education, or any one of scores of books from her pen. You will discover on every page the unmistakable imprint of divine inspiration.

11. In these days of "women's lib" another question may be asked: does the Bible tell of women (as well as men) being called to the work of a prophet? Read Exodus 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14; Acts 21:8, 9.

ANSWER (list a few names): _____.

12. You want to become a strong, happy Christian, one who will "grow up" into the Lord, and be a help to others. What then will be your attitude toward the messages that come from God's genuine gift of prophecy? 2 Chronicles 20:20.

ANSWER: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be _____; believe his _____, so shall ye _____."

Those who sincerely and humbly accept the message of the gift of prophecy (sometimes spoken of as "the Spirit of Prophecy") grow into happy, devoted Christians. Their lives and influence also build up the church. Even whole churches, as well as institutions, prosper amazingly when they follow the counsel the Lord has given through this gift.

13. When the genuine "testimony of Jesus" speaks to us, what kind of a message does He give us? Revelation 3:19.

ANSWER: "As many as I _____, I _____ and _____: be zealous therefore, and _____."

The writings of Ellen G. White, as the "testimony of Jesus," often bring reproof. But there is always healing as well. We are constantly pointed to the Lamb of God, who takes away sin. Read 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2 and see how this truth of the cross is uplifted in the Spirit of Prophecy writings:

"If sinners can be led to give one earnest look at the cross, if they can obtain a full view of the crucified Savior, they will realize the depth of God's compassion and the sinfulness of sin.

"Christ's death proves God's great love for man. It is our pledge of salvation. To remove the cross from the Christian would be like blotting the sun from the sky. The cross brings us near to God, reconciling us to Him. With the relenting compassion of a father's love, Jehovah looks upon the suffering that His Son endured in order to save the race from eternal death, and accepts us in the Beloved." The Acts of the Apostles, p. 209.

14. Would you like to "taste" for yourself how good is the message of the Spirit of Prophecy? _____.

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7 "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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