

How to Recognize a Prophet in our Midst

July 22, 2012

A person can be 'self-aware'

1Co 14:37 NIV **If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.**

But it is best if others recognize the "grace given"

Confirmation from others in ministry is vital - avoiding self ordination

Gal 2:1-2 NIV Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, **I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.**

Galatians 2:8-10 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. 9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when **they recognized the grace given** to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

- each one has received a grace or ministry
- some are a 5-fold - with the primary function of equipping
- a need to acknowledge the work that God is doing and his grace at work in others

NT Prophets were a normal part of church life

We talked last week about the timeline for 5-fold (from the ascension until unity in the faith). Essentially these are given for the entire church age. Prophets were a normal occurrence in the life of the NT church, and should be today as well. Prophets are not some mystical ethereal person, we should look at them no differently than we look at pastors...they simply have received a different 5-fold gift...and **carry out a different equipping function.**

Act 11:25-27 NIV ...The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. 27 **During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.**

Act 13:1-3 NIV Now in the church at Antioch **there were prophets and teachers:**

Act 15:30-35 NIV 32 **Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets,** said much to encourage and strengthen the believers....

Act 21:7-11 NIV 10 After we had been there a number of days, **a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.**

1Co 12:27-29 NIV Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And **God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets**, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues...

1Co 14:27-32 NIV ... **Two or three prophets should speak**, and the others should weigh carefully what is said... 32 **The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.**

1Co 14:37 NIV **If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit**, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

1Jn 4:1 NIV Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, **because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

How to Recognize a Prophet in our Midst

- Bill Powell believes he has been called to be a prophet for quite some time
- I struggled with moving forward in recognizing and laying hands on him as in my mind I was basing my judgement on the need to see more of a predictive aspect to his ministry
- I set my heart to examine from scripture - How were prophets used, and how were they recognized.
- What I found I will share with you today

Galatians 2:8-10 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. 9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when **they recognized the grace given** to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

To recognize or perceive (other ways the word is used in NT)

Mat 16:1-3 NIV The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' 3 and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' **You know how to interpret** the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

Mat 24:32 NIV "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, **you know** that summer is near.

Luk 6:44 NIV Each tree is **recognized** by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars.

Php 2:21-22 NIV For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But **you know** that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

I Needed to See How Were Prophets Used or Recognized in Scripture - What Were The Indicators?

Predictive Words

The prophet Agabus was used in prophecy in a predictive way.

Acts 21:10-11 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

Acts 11:27-28 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)

A Message of Repentance

John the Baptist was a prophet. It indicates it was his message - a call to repentance that identified him as a prophet, not that he was predictive

Matthew 11:9-10 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

Luke 1:76-80 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." 80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Jonah was a prophet - his was a message of repentance, not predictive per se

Matthew 12:39 He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Encouragement and Exhortation

With the prophets Judas and Silas there is no mention of their being used in a predictive manner, but it states they encouraged and exhorted the brothers

Acts 15:30-33 The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. 31 The people read it and were glad for its

encouraging message. 32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. 33 After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them.

The Word of Knowledge

Jesus was used in the Word of Knowledge - The woman said, “I perceive you are a prophet” ...the proof of the prophet’s mantle *in her eyes* was that he knew something about her that could not have been known other than by divine revelation

John 4:16-19 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” 17 “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.” 19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.

Word of knowledge?

Luke 7:39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

Directive

More directive than predictive. I assume that when “the Holy Spirit said” that what was said was spoken by one of the prophets.

Acts 13:1-2 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Seems to Indicate it was Simply God’s Choice

While it is an Old Testament example, it appears that Elisha was anointed as a prophet before any mention was made of his prophesying

1 Kings 19:13-16 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” 14 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” 15 The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. 16 Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.

Miraculous Signs

Prophet recognized in a miraculous sign

Luke 7:14-16 Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. 16 They were all filled with awe and praised

God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.”

Miraculous signs

John 6:13-14 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. 14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

Miraculous sign

John 9:16-17 Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” So they were divided. 17 Finally they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

Powerful Words

Jesus a prophet - powerful in word and deed

Luke 24:19 “What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.”

Hearing the words - this man is THE Prophet

John 7:40 On hearing his words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet.”

David was a prophet

Acts 2:29-35 “Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 **Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ,** that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

The Requirement of Relationship with the Lord

God needs to send, appoint and speak to them

Jeremiah 14:14 Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds.

The need to be sent and to be spoken to by the Lord - to stand in his counsel

Jeremiah 23:21-22 I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. 22 But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.

The importance of being men of the word

Jeremiah 5:12-13 They have lied about the LORD; they said, “He will do nothing! No harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine. 13 The prophets are but wind and the word is not in them; so let what they say be done to them.”

1 Corinthians 14:37 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

Receive a Prophet - Receive the Reward

Receive a prophet who is a prophet receives a prophet's reward

Matthew 10:40-41 "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. 41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.

He who receives a prophet

Receiving a prophet would seem to imply receiving his message as from God, but maybe receiving him, could relate to caring for as well: See the stories of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-24) and a Shunammite couple (2 Kings 4:8-27). In both, the host provided for the basic needs of a prophet. Each received a gift of life.

Some received and some rejected the message of John the Baptist

Luk 7:26-30 NIV But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." 28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. 30 But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

Prophet's reward?

Luke 4:24-27 "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

A prophet without honor

Matthew 13:57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor."

Prophets Are Not Infallible

1 Chronicles 17:1-4 After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent." 2 Nathan replied to David, "Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you." 3 That night the word of God came to Nathan, saying: 4 "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build me a house to dwell in.'"

2-3 prophets should speak

1 Corinthians 14:29-32 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. 30 And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. 31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

Summary:

A man who is a prophet can be recognized by the fruit of their ministry. While a prophet foretelling something for the future is biblical, it is obvious from scripture that that was not the only (nor did it appear to be a necessary) criteria for acknowledging the prophetic gift. The 8 things mentioned above are some of the ways we see in scripture that a man is recognized as a prophet. It is also important that this grace be recognized by others in ministry

- The predictive nature of their ministry
- A ministry of a call to repentance
- A ministry of encouragement and exhortation
- The use of the word of knowledge
- Sometimes directive rather than predictive
- By God's choice as in the case of Elisha
- Through powerful words & miraculous signs

The relationship with the Lord is indispensable. A man who is a "seer" or one who "hears" from God must be a man who spends time in prayer, fellowship and relationship with Him.

The gift of a prophet is a normal part of new testament church life and a gift that should be recognized and acknowledged in the church.

The role of a New Testament prophet is an equipping function.

The reward of the prophet goes to those who receive a prophet in the name of a prophet.

Prophets are not infallible.

We recognize this grace in Bill's life

Galatians 2:8-10 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. 9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when **they recognized the grace given** to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

We will lay hands on him and release him for this work to which God has called him

The act of laying on hands and releasing them made the teachers Barnabas and Paul of Acts 13, the apostles Barnabas and Paul of Acts 14.

Act 13:1-3 NIV Now in the church at Antioch **there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas**, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up

with Herod the tetrarch) and **Saul**. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "**Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul** for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, **they placed their hands on them and sent them off**.

Act 14:14 NIV But when **the apostles Barnabas and Paul** heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: