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PROPHECY – TRUE OR FALSE?

For many years most Christian churches have believed that the gift of prophecy ceased with the death of the twelve apostles of Jesus. They feel that the New Testament is the last of God's revelations to us. But what does the Bible really teach on this subject? Is prophecy to continue afterwards? In this lesson we shall explore these and other questions.

1. When Christ went to heaven after His resurrection, what different gifts did He give to His church? Ephesians 4:7, 8, 11

2. What were the three reasons why He gave us these gifts? Ephesians 4:11-13

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

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

Note: All Christians agree that the gift 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." This time has certainly not come yet. Therefore the church still needs these gifts, including the gift of prophecy.

4. What is Paul's counsel to us about how not to "put out the Spirit's fire?"
1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20

5. What is his advice for us regarding prophecies?
1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1

6. Why should we test prophets? Mathew 24:24

7. What does the Bible predict will happen in the last days before the return of Christ? Joel 2:28-31

*Note: God says that in the last days before His return He will give prophecies and visions to His people, both men and women. Prior to the world being destroyed by a flood, God sent Noah to warn the world before it happened. Wouldn't it make sense for God to send special warnings to the world before it is ultimately destroyed by fire? But because there will be "false prophets" that will come we are told not to "treat prophecies with contempt" but to **test them**.*

8. What is one of the ways we can test a prophet? Matthew 7:15-20

9. What test must be applied to a prophet's teaching and work? 1 John 4:2; Isaiah 8:19, 20

Note: According to the word of God, a true prophet must harmonize with all the law and teachings of the Bible. There have been some who have been called prophets in this last century but if his instruction is contrary to the Bible, he proves himself to be false. For instance, in the '70s Jeanne Dixon and Ruth Montgomery believed in communion with the dead. Since the Bible teaches so clearly that only God is immortal and that until Christ comes again man is mortal, no so-called prophet who believes in the natural immortality of the soul could possibly be a true prophet. (See Twelve Tests of a True Prophet at the end of this lesson.)

In the fall of 1844, a young man by the name of Hazen Foss received what he believed to be a vision from God. Shortly afterward he was told to relate the vision to others but he was afraid to do so. He said God warned him of the consequences of not obeying and that if he refused, the light would be given to someone else. Being fearful of ridicule, he refused to relate the vision. Then, very strange feelings came to him, and a voice said, "You have grieved away the Spirit of the Lord." Horrified at his own stubbornness and rebellion, he told the Lord that he would relate the vision, but when he assembled a company of Christian believers, he could not remember the vision. In vain

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were his attempts to call up the scenes as they had been shown to him; and then in deep despair he exclaimed, "It is gone from me; I can say nothing and the Spirit of the Lord has left me." Eyewitnesses described it as the most terrifying meeting they were ever in.

Early in 1845, Foss overheard a young, frail 17 year old girl named Ellen Harmon relate a vision she had experienced to a company of believers at Portland, Maine. He recognized her vision as the one that had been given him earlier. Upon meeting her the next morning, he recounted his experience and encouraged her to faithfully perform her work, stating: "I believe the visions are taken from me and given to you. Do not refuse to obey God, for it will be at the peril of your soul. I am a lost man. You are chosen of God; be faithful in doing your work, and the crown I might have had, you will receive." On comparing dates, they discovered that it was not until after he had been told that the visions were taken from him, that Ellen was given her first revelation.

Ellen G. White was a woman who had an incredible relationship with the Lord as evidenced from her writings. It is estimated that she had approximately 2000 visions varying in length from 15 minutes to almost four hours. During a vision Mrs. White's breathing ceased entirely. Her heart and pulse continued to beat and her eyes were always open and directed upward. Until her death at 87 in 1915, this messenger of God faithfully fulfilled her work and bore the fruits of genuineness. Never in a single instance did her teachings vary from the acid test of Holy Scriptures. Her very last words uttered in a large public meeting were: "Brethren and sisters, I commend to you this Book [the Bible]." Her life and writings "edified" (built up) the church, strengthened the ministry, glorified Christ, and led to the "perfecting of the saints."

Though only having a third grade education, she is one of the most published authors and her books have been translated into more languages than any other female author. Millions of people attest to the value of her writings in leading them closer to the Lord. Also a vast and worldwide movement embracing schools, hospitals, universities, publishing houses, and even a medical school, are the direct fruit of her life of service and her revelation from the Lord. If one applies Jesus' test to her, "By their fruits you shall know them," he finds abundant evidence that her call was indeed a genuine one.

TWELVE TESTS OF A TRUE PROPHET

1. A true prophet does not lie. His non-conditional prediction will always be 100% right and accurate. (Deuteronomy 18:21, 22)
2. A true prophet does not prophesy for fees, charges or payments. (2 Kings 5:15, 16)
3. A true prophet does not give even his own private interpretation of his or another prophet's prophecy. It is always the Lord's interpretation based on what he was revealed. (2 Peter 1:20)
4. A true prophet does not prophesy in his own name. It is always in the name of the Lord. (2 Peter 1:21)
5. A true prophet points out the sins, transgressions and iniquities of the people against God. (Isaiah 58:1)
6. A true prophet warns the people of God's coming judgments. (Isaiah 24:19-21)
7. A true prophet edifies the church with counsel and advice in religious matters. (1 Corinthians 14:3, 4)
8. A true prophet will be in absolute harmony with the words of preceding prophets. (1 Corinthians 14:21, Isaiah 8:20)
9. A true prophet recognizes the incarnation and divinity of Jesus Christ. (1 John 1-4)
10. A true prophet when in vision, will not breathe. (Daniel 10:15, 17)
11. A true prophet can be recognized by the results of his or her works. (Matthew 7:16-20)
12. A true prophet acts in accordance with the will and the approval of God expressed in the Bible in general, and the 10 commandments in particular. (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19)

ANSWER KEY TO LESSON #29

Q. 1- Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers

Q. 2- a- to prepare God's people for acts of service;
b- the body of Christ may be built up;
c- so we may all reach unity and maturity

Q. 3- Till the end of time

Q. 4- Do not treat prophecies with contempt

Q. 5- Test prophecies

Q. 6- God warns us against "false" prophets

Q. 7- God's Spirit will be poured out in dreams and visions

Q. 8- By their fruits or actions you will recognize them

Q. 9- They must harmonize with the laws and teachings of the Bible