

In a previous article entitled, *the New Apostolic Reformation*, we pointed out how a number of individuals influenced by this movement often predict future events that never come to pass. Most of the time this is either deliberate mockery of Christianity, or a tool for political propaganda!

Yet at the same time, making false predictions can also be true for genuine Bible-believing Christians, and results from failing to distinguish between the Ministry of a Prophet and the simple Gift of Prophecy. Below we will provide a few examples from Scripture to support our argument.

in his First Epistle to the Church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul mentions the Gift of Prophecy, among many other Spiritual Gifts, for the Body of Christ. He encourages all believers to strive for these Spiritual Gifts, but especially that they might prophesy. He explains why:

Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church. Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. One who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

(1 Corinthians 14:4-6)

But concerning the Ministry of a Prophet, Paul writes elsewhere:

The gifts that he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

(Ephesians 4:11-13)

Notice, in First Corinthians quoted above Paul makes it clear that every believer may have the Gift of Prophecy and prophesy. However, earlier in chapter twelve of First Corinthians he asks, “*Are all prophets?*” The obvious answer is no. By this we see that a believer may prophesy, but that does not make him a Prophet, otherwise Paul would be contradicting himself!

There are examples also in the Book of Acts where distinctions are made between the two. We hear of a Prophet named Agabus, but of the daughters of Philip who had the Gift of Prophecy.

That being established, we will now look at what makes the Ministry of a Prophet and the Gift of Prophecy different. The latter prophecies to people for “*their upbuilding, and encouragement and consolation.*”

The former, on the other hand, is never among the laity, because they are called full time to the ministry, as are the Teachers, Evangelists, Pastors, and so forth.

And like the other Ministry Gifts listed in Ephesians, a Prophet is first and foremost a teacher and preacher of the Word of God! But probably what most distinguishes the Ministry of a Prophet from the Gift of Prophecy, and the other Ministry Gifts, is the ability to foretell, or make future predictions.

As stated earlier, not knowing these Biblical truths, some Christians with the simple Gift of Prophecy feel they can do all these things that a Prophet does and that is where the trouble starts!

This is stated clearly in Romans twelve verse six. Here Paul says that believers are to prophesy in proportion to the faith given to them by the Holy Spirit, meaning it is possible to depart from their allotment.

Finally, it would be helpful before closing to underline a much more serious error than carelessly overstepping prophetic boundaries that many professing Christians make.

I am referring to the excessive energies invested in “discernment ministry,” and the almost deafening silence on more vital issues, like defending the present-day ministry of the Holy Spirit! Matthew Henry puts it well in his commentary on Laodicea, where he says:

If religion is worth anything, it is worth everything. Christ expects men to be in earnest. How many professors of gospel doctrine are neither hot nor cold; except as they are indifferent in needful matters, and hot and fiery in disputes about things of lesser moment!

But quite sad and tragic is Henry's description of the outcome:

They would give a false opinion of Christianity, as if it were an unholy religion; while others would conclude it could afford no real satisfaction, otherwise its professors would not have been heartless in it, or so ready to seek pleasure or happiness from the world.