

THE NT PROPHET AND THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

(Selected Scriptures)

The gift of prophecy defined: the gift of prophecy is a divine ability to speak forth divinely-inspired messages that are absolutely true, trustworthy, and without error for the purpose of edification, encouragement, comfort, and learning.

NT EXAMPLES OF WAYS THE PROPHET FUNCTIONED:

PROPHET	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
Agabus	Acts 11:27-28a And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world...	Acts 11:28b ...which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.
Various Prophets Acts 13:1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.	Acts 13:2-3 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said , "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent [them] away.	Acts 13:3-4 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.
Agabus Acts 21:10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.	Acts 21:11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his [own] hands and feet, and said, " Thus says the Holy Spirit , 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"	Acts 21:33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded [him] to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. Acts 22:25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

FACTS ABOUT THE NT PROPHET:

1. Like the apostles, NT prophets were part of the **foundation** of the church

Ephesians 2:19-20 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on **the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.

It is the nature of a building that you do not continue to build the foundation. Once it is laid, the superstructure is then built upon it. 2,000 years ago the foundation of the church was laid, but the superstructure has continued to be built. This foundation metaphor implies that the gift of prophecy has ceased.

2. The prophet **edified** encouraged, comforted, and taught

Though prophets *did* predict future events, they were also given messages from God for the *practical* benefit of God's people.

1 Corinthians 14:3 ...he who prophesies speaks **edification** and **exhortation** [= encouragement] and **comfort** to men.

1 Corinthians 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may **learn** and all may be **encouraged**.

3. The prophet communicated **knowledge** and mysteries

1 Corinthians 13:2 And though I have **the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge**, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

"Mysteries" defined: information never previously revealed

Note the revelatory aspect of prophecy:

Ephesians 3:3, 5 ...by revelation He [God] **made known to me the mystery** ...⁵which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been **revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets...**

1 Corinthians 14:29-----²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is **revealed** to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.

4. The prophets were to **stop** and allow other prophets in the assembly to speak

1 Corinthians 14:29-33 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.
³⁰ But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³ For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

(14:29) **the others** = those with the spiritual gift of discerning of spirits (see 12:10)

(14:29) **judge** = weigh carefully, from *diakrinetōsan* (verb).

Compare with 12:10 where **discerning** of spirits is *diakriseis* (noun).

1 John 4:1 Beloved, **do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God**; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 Do not despise prophecies. ²¹ **Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

5. The prophet controlled the use of his gift — his gift did not **control** him

1 Corinthians 14:32-33 And **the spirits** of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

(14:32) **the spirits** = the prophetic gift

In the Bible Knowledge Commentary, David K. Lowery wrote:

“The spirits” referred to a prophet’s spiritual gift, which did not control the gifted member, but he controlled it (cf. v. 30) [see point #4 above]. If two or three prophets spoke in a particular service, others gifted and with something to say could do so on another occasion. The church was not a forum for personal pontification or self-glorification; it was a place where people were to be built up and God was to be honored (cf. 10:31–33).¹

Q & A

¹ David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 540.