



New Testament Prophets

Owen Carey . 2019

Prologue

After His resurrection, Jesus ascended on high in order to fill all things (Greek, PAS – everything, i.e., “the whole universe” – NIV, Amp. [Ephesians 4:10]). He intended to fill the whole creation with His glory. In order to implement His strategy, He began giving gifts to His people. He gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers that He might bring forth on earth an integrated singular corporate man that would appear at first glance to be headless. But He would be its head functioning from heaven. From the right hand of the Majesty on high, He would coordinate a miracle on earth – many people moving as one both in their lived-out faith and in their knowledge of Him (Ephesians 4:8 – 13). Here would be His means of revealing His glory on earth.

Filling heaven with His glory did not take long. When He ascended, He received dominion, glory, and a kingdom which would endure forever (Daniel 7:13 – 14). When He sat down to rule, He did so having received all authority in heaven and on earth with the expectation that every enemy opposing Him would be made a footstool for His feet (Hebrews 1:13). But the process of fulfilling His work on earth has indeed been taking a bit longer. One primary reason is that the five ministries have not clearly understood their mission – to contribute toward specific local examples and expressions of what seems to be a headless corporate body that somehow by grace is revealing one heart and mind – even the mind of Christ. To labor for this miracle requires humility, accountability, and teachableness. And the saints will never come to such a lifestyle if their leaders are not walking it out as an example before them. Prophets simply must live their lives in a way that expresses their need for teachers (and the other ministries) around them to whom they are accountable. And viceversa. This requires them to serve in local church settings. Or if they have been sent out to serve in the larger body of Christ, they must then at some point return and function with local accountability until the Lord releases them again.

Because many have not understood what the Lord is establishing on earth in order to fill it with His glory, we have many who function as singular ministries – like Old Testament prophets in a New Testament era. With New Testament prophets, especially, it is easy to see why they would do this. But the winds of change are blowing. Christ must be revealed from heaven in and through local functioning expressions of His body.

Owen Carey lives his life to see this vision come to pass. His quest is Christ - to know Him and to see Him revealed not only in individual lives but in the corporate gatherings of His people as well. He carries an apostolic grace to point out when people promote any other agenda. He does this not in order to specifically cause a conflict but because one who lays the foundation of Jesus Christ in the house that He is building simply has no choice in the matter. No agenda but Christ. Or, as Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). In conclusion, God primarily used prophets to write the Old Testament Scriptures and apostles to write the New Testament Scriptures. But the prophets of today must

move into the apostles' neighborhood. Their ministries will only be fruitful in the ultimate sense when they discover how to function within the apostolic vision.

Don Rumble – September 2020

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Tracking and Prophecy

While being prophetic is about being free in the Holy Spirit, the early church also saw that they needed to follow some parameters in their prophetic ministry.

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. (1 Corinthians 14:29 – 33)

God does have parameters for us to follow as He restores the ministry of New Testament prophets in these days. Hopefully, this booklet will be helpful as we look at this strategic subject.

Here is a question. Do you track what the Holy Spirit says when you gather together with your local church? Obviously, He is not looking for our applause but for our obedience. Therefore, it is important to track, to follow what the Holy Spirit is saying and then take notes. For example, aren't you glad that Doctor Luke tracked what the Holy Spirit was saying when he traveled with the apostles? His notes and observations ultimately became the book of Acts. Clearly, Luke was a faithful scribe.

One of the functions of leadership is to teach and train people to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:14 it says, *"for all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."* When we hear Him and obey, it is so freeing. But it is all going somewhere. When you read the end of the Bible, you see Christ's Body coming together, His Bride making herself ready. On the other hand, when we look at her in our own day, we sometimes wonder, *"Lord, I don't know how You're going to get us to the full stature that we see in scripture."* Then the Lord reminds us of Ezekiel when he saw the valley of dry bones. The Lord asked him, *"Son of man, can these bones live?"* And Ezekiel answered, *"O Lord God, You know."* Then, the Lord had him prophesy into what was happening, to prophesy to the wind/the breath of the Lord.

So, in my own life, I am constantly prophesying myself into God's strategy. *"Lord, you know that the Body will come together. Hallelujah. You'll remove what needs to be removed and you'll pour out the grace we need so that Your Church can become one."* Scripture says that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). When God sends someone to testify about what He has done in them, that is their testimony. But to those listening, it is prophetic. God is showing them what they too can have. And so, the testimony of Jesus, the spirit of the prophetic, releases faith – faith to know Him. Here is why we gather together – to know God, to discover Him.

Some Prophetic History

Just for some context, I would like to share some of the history and development of a number of relationships that have been strategic in my life and that have carried prophetic significance for me.

Back in the 1970s, God established a number of spiritual epicenters. An epicenter was a place where He sovereignly poured out His Spirit and then from there impacted a region. We saw Him do this in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and California. In Kingston, New York the Fountain of Life church became an epicenter. The same was true in the wonderful work He was doing among us in Laconia, New Hampshire.

In the beginning of that particular move of the Spirit, He used a prophetic man named George Henry. I have talked about him many times over the years. He received a prophetic word in the early 1960s that he was to go to northern New England and pray for a move of the Holy Spirit. When the Lord gives clear prophetic direction, we have two choices. We can either reject it or obey it. George Henry chose to obey the Lord.

And so, though he was old, George quit his job, picked up his family and moved to northern New England and began to pray. For three years he went from church to church, scouting the land. But in place after place, He knew that he hadn't found what he was looking for. He knew there was more. So, He continued to pray. Prayer and endurance are so important for us if we want to participate in what God intends to birth. Sometimes, we quit so easily. Yet after three years of praying, George finally in his frustration decided one Sunday to stay home. Turning on his radio, he heard a Baptist minister preaching. God said, *"Start listening to him. Pray for him. He is one of the men I am going to use in the move of the Holy Spirit."* George, being a good ol' Pentecostal, said, *"Lord, he's a Baptist!"* But the Lord said, *"You pray for him. I'm going to do something."*

After that, every Sunday, George got up and turned on the radio and listened to this evangelical Baptist minister named David Gbur for about six months. Then one Sunday after turning on the radio, the brother he had been listening to wasn't there. Some other man was preaching. George thought, *"What's going on?!"* God said, *"Keep praying!!"* About six months later, George was invited to a meeting. He came in, sat down, and heard one man talking to another. And as he heard the men speak, he recognized one of their voices as the man he had been hearing on the radio. So, he asked, *"Are you David Gbur?"* And sure enough, he was. So, George knew he was right where he was supposed to be.

What had happened was that there had been much discussion about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, the local pastors had invited David Wilkerson to come and preach on that subject. Guess what happened. The Holy Spirit fell! With that came a storm and turmoil because the men involved had come from such a diversity of Christian backgrounds. In that room was David Gbur, an evangelical

Baptist minister and with him Don Littlefield and a few other men who had all come out of their local church (they had gotten the “right foot of fellowship” out of their assembly). There was also Bob Mears who was an American Baptist who had gotten filled with the Holy Spirit. And with him was Al Graustein who eventually ran our Christian school. Also, there was Percy Abbott who was an Advent Christian minister. And then there was Keith Bryar who owned Bryar Motor Sport Park which is now New England Speedway.

And so, these men continued to gather together and to seek the Lord about what was to happen next. They began to ask themselves, *“If we were wrong about the baptism in the Holy Spirit belonging only in a past dispensation of time, what else have we been wrong about?”* So, they decided to not do anything until they heard from God. And like good Baptists/Evangelicals, they went to the Word of God. If it wasn’t in the Word, then they weren’t going to go along with it. Out of their search came an absolutely incredible move of the Holy Spirit. Some years later, in 1979, Dave Gbur took a church planting team to Savannah, Georgia; I took one to Concord, New Hampshire. Then in 1981, John Harwood, a Pentecostal brother who was planting the church with me invited me to go with him to a conference in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

Overseeing that conference were three Latter Rain men (they had participated in the Latter Rain revival that began in Saskatchewan, Canada in 1948) – Joe Crandall, B.J. Pruitt, and Philip Saunders. All the other men who were there were pastors of different churches. I’ll never forget one of those meetings. They started it by saying, *“Okay, tonight is a Nugget of Truth night.”* I thought, *“A Nugget of Truth. What’s that?”* It meant that each of the pastors would get up and give a synopsis of their latest sermon or revelation from the Lord. As the sharing went on, I was thinking, *“Man, what will I share?!”* Then one of the brethren, Jose Dross gave his Nugget of Truth. And when he did that, the Holy Spirit gave me a prophetic word for him. I was saying to myself, *“No. No. No! I don’t know anybody here!”* And since Jose had to leave because of other appointments, he put on his overcoat and began moving toward the door. Then as he was being stopped by various brethren for fellowship, I was debating with the Lord, *“Please, please, O Lord. . .”*

Finally, it was my turn to share a Nugget. So, I said, *“I could give a Nugget of Truth but I’ve got a prophetic word for that Hispanic brother over there. What should I do with it?”* The leadership was quite clear. *“Go give it to him, brother. What’s the matter with you?”*

So, I did and God began to move by His Spirit! People from all over the room were prophesying over one another. And it went on for the rest of the night. It was awesome! When the meeting ended and we were going to get meals or snacks, these three old Latter Rain brethren came up to me. *“Brother Carey, we want to have breakfast with you tomorrow. We’ll pick you up at 6:30 am.”* *“Uh oh,”* I thought. *“Why didn’t I give just one word? Why didn’t I keep my mouth shut?”* John Harwood saw me going through this and came up to me and said,

“Well remember what you always teach in the churches. ‘If you want to ACT, stay Accountable, Correctable, and Teachable.’ So, just listen to what the brothers have to say. It might be time to take some of your own medicine.” All right. All right.

When John and I got back to our motel, he went into his room and I went into mine. After about fifteen minutes of seeking the Lord, I sensed the Holy Spirit drawing me to a particular scripture verse. Immediately, I opened the door to go and tell John. But he was already at my door about to knock! God had given us both a word at the same time. And they were both in Ecclesiastes. Both were in chapter seven. In fact, they were the exact same verse!

It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them. (Ecclesiastes 7:18)

We didn’t have a clue what it meant but we knew it was supernatural, that God was speaking to us. We went to bed and then the next morning those three men picked me up. We went to a restaurant and as we sat there, they said, *“Brother Carey, you have the marks of an old Latter Rain man in your life.”* *“Really?”* *“Yeah, do you know George Henry?”* *“What?! Yeah, how do you know him?”* *So, I told them the story of how God had used him in New England. Well, they got up and started dancing around. What in the world was going on?! Then they said, “Well, brother, Joe Crandall here was the one who prophesied over George in 1964 that he was to go to New England. And by the way, the Lord also told us that you are to preach the word tonight.”* *“Me? I don’t even know you people. Are you kidding?”* *“No, that’s what God told us. He told us that He gave you a word.”* Then I remembered Ecclesiastes 7:18 and how the Lord had given that verse to me. When I told them, they replied, *“Well, there you go then.”*

All day long, I tried to find something fresh from the Lord from the verse in Ecclesiastes. I looked in my concordance, at various other passages in my Bible. I got nothing – except to fill the trash can in my room with crumpled paper. Finally, in my frustration I went to the evening meal. I was sitting there and John came up. *“What are you going to share?”* *“I’m not sharing anything. I’m going to tell them I don’t have anything.”* Sure enough, the leaders got up and told the story of George Henry. And then they said, *“We have a brother here who told us this amazing story. Brother Carey, come on down to the front!”* But when I told them that I didn’t have anything to share, one of the leaders said, *“Oh just get down here. God will give it to you on the way.”*

So, I did. And by the time I got to the front I knew exactly what I was going to say. At that time, because God was pouring out His Spirit in the various places where we ministered, we had begun using phrases like, *“We’re on the cutting edge of what God is doing now.”* After all, we were working with quite a few elders, we were planting a number of churches. *“We must certainly be on the front lines of God’s work on earth.”* But then as I was walking to the front of the meeting that night, the Holy Spirit convicted me. And I immediately knew that I had to confess to the men of that gathering what God was saying to me. *“What I’ve*

seen here tonight for the first time is that there have been other men who have gone before us. And we have simply entered into their labors. Therefore, on behalf of the brethren that I labor with, I want to repent to you, for our pride and our arrogance.”

While I was talking, unbeknownst to me, one of the men had gone out and come back with a towel and basin. After sharing that scripture, *“It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them,”* I said, *“I don’t know how God’s going to do this but somehow there is something old and something new that He is going to do in our midst and we need to be open to it.”* Then they came up and began washing my feet. And I just sat there crying like a baby. It was an amazing move of the Holy Spirit. Since those days, I have tried to honor those who have gone before us as well as try to move with what God is emphasizing in the present.

Some years later, I was helping a group start a church on Long Island and one day as I opened my wallet, a slip of paper fell out with Jose’s name and phone number on it. Since I didn’t remember his last name, I asked one of the brothers if the number was local. He said that it was. So, I dialed it and Jose answered. *“Jose, I am on Long Island. Where are you?”* It turned out that he was in Sayville, the next town over from Bellport where I was. How amazing is that?

The truth is that God was making connections among brethren from all kinds of different backgrounds – Pentecostal, Latter Rain, Charismatic, various denominations, and us – whatever we were. As for us, we were just trying to represent the Kingdom of God the best we knew how. But there were those who just didn’t quite know what to do with us. Some would ask us what Bible college or seminary we had attended. My usual response was, *“I went to J.C.U., Jesus Christ University. I majored in the Holy Spirit.”* So, they’d ask, *“Well where is your home office, your headquarters?”* *“Well, I guess you could say it’s in heaven!”* *“Really? Do you guys follow a curriculum?”* *“Well yeah, the Bible.”* To be honest, we didn’t feel like we needed to apologize for our lack of formal education, but at the same time I think there were some who thought that maybe we were being prideful, that we thought of ourselves as better/more spiritual than them. And again, as I discovered in the Williamsport conference, there was indeed an element of pride in our hearts. But since the days of that conference, we really have tried to honor those who went before us, to see ourselves as connected to the works of God in past generations. At the same time, we want to learn from the mistakes of history and not reproduce some of the same weaknesses we see in the larger Church.

So, as best we knew how, we studied God’s Word and tried to build in His house according to what was written. Later in 1981, Don Rumble and I were invited to speak at a conference in Springfield, Massachusetts. We hadn’t met before and I don’t remember who spoke first but we both proclaimed the centrality of Jesus. Later, we were up almost the whole night fellowshiping around that theme. It was clear that God was connecting us relationally. The church that Don was

from had been founded through an emphasis on teaching from the word of God. On the other hand, our experience had been more rooted in prophetic ministry. And so, as we discovered each other, God began to strategically connect the prophetic and the didactic. Clearly, prophets and teachers must see their need for each other and learn to walk together as peers in accountable relationship. And the Lord has continued to strengthen that relationship and many others over the years. In fact, you could say that God's Kingdom was like leaven hidden in the lump of those days and yet also slowly spreading. And it continues to expand today.

Then we found out that the brother of one of our elders was Dr. Chuck Farah, a professor of theology at O.R.U. He too was a member of an epicenter New Testament church that met there in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They were building with a plurality of elders and seeking to keep Christ central in their midst. And they were also proclaiming in the city a proper understanding of faith. Dr. Farah had written an extremely strategic book called *"From the Pinnacle of the Temple,"* where he taught the difference between faith and presumption. But because there was so much teaching on the power of faith in that city, Chuck found himself embroiled in a certain amount of controversy. But God was with him and he functioned at O.R.U. as a professor until he retired.

So, God was connecting us to another epicenter. He had sovereignly poured out His Spirit in Tulsa and the brethren there had gone to the Scriptures as we had. One of those men, Jim Garret began calling together an annual Conclave of elders in St. Louis, Missouri. Brethren who functioned as local elders would come from all over the country. Some were from big churches, some from little ones, and some even from house churches. We would come to worship and to prayerfully discuss topics that were relevant to the day. Since Jim was a Greek and Hebrew scholar, we could get into some pretty in-depth studies. He along with some other brothers would do papers on various aspects of New Testament church life. And then there would be times of discussion around what had been presented. *"How does that apply to California? How does that apply to cold, dead New England?"* We all began to be broadened and deepened in our relationships with the Lord and with each other.

Then three years ago, it began to change. We began to realize that because some of the leaders from these churches were young, they could not afford to go to the Conclave. It would simply cost them too much to take a week off from work and then travel to St. Louis. While they might have a wonderful time attending, their families would suffer. So, to address this problem, we sought the Lord. And in our hearts, we felt that He was saying, *"Break up into regional gatherings."* So since then, we have had two regional gatherings out of which then came the Prophetic Conference that we had in Kingston, NY in September 2019.

I wanted to put this history down on paper in order to more clearly present what God was doing in our part of His kingdom leading to where we are today.

In my own local church, New Testament Christian Fellowship, we are seeking to walk together as a prophetic people. One example of this is what we call “Remember the Deeds of the Lord” Sunday. On the last Sunday of each year we ask everyone in the Body to come and be prepared to share at least one testimony of what the Lord did for them the previous year. Then as people testified, faith was then built up in the hearts of everyone else. We would conclude by then saying to the people, “*Okay. Thank you for sharing what God has done for you last year. Now next week we’re asking you to come prepared to tell us what you believe God will be doing for you this coming year.*” So, for us, the next Sunday, the first of the new year has become known as “Prophetic Sunday”.

And like clockwork, every year, God has shown His faithfulness by pointing us back to what He had spoken prophetically and how he fulfilled His word. At the same time, He then always points us forward to the coming year. We are discovering how important it is to be a prophetic people. The problem is that there is way too much weirdness that seems to accompany so much of what is called prophetic in the Lord’s Church. This year (2019) God spoke to us about change, change in the midst of turmoil. All throughout the year that is what we heard. Then a few months ago when I visited the Kingston, NY area, Bertha Rumble (Don’s mom who is 98 years old) had a word, “*A storm is coming! Sharpen the point of your sword and get rid of all fear.*” Then God gave me a word to preach to the churches based on what she had heard.

Today as we seek to be a prophetic people, problems abound. There can be a certain amount of weirdness that people can fall into and we must learn to shepherd the issues that arise. I think that is why Paul instructed the church in Thessalonica to, “*not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good*” (1Thessalonians 5:20 – 21). Separating out what is worthless from what is precious is a major part of the task we face as we move forward in the purpose of God.

He has taught us many lessons in the last fifty years since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the 1970s. And what we have learned has been well worth the blood, sweat, and tears.

Old and New Testament Prophets

I am often asked, “*What do you think of all the prophetic ministry taking place across the nation?*” My answer is this, “*I see a lot of people functioning like Old Testament prophets in a New Testament era.*” Most of them when asked to define what it is to be prophetic will use Old Testament examples like Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, or Ezekiel, etc. But what about the New Testament? What is a New Testament prophet?

Here is just one example of a situation I experienced. Some brethren who were hosting a prophetic conference asked me to be a speaker. Don Rumble and I had previously traveled frequently to speak at various conferences and churches. But over time, we began to feel that what we were doing had the flavor of pro-

moting something. Like we had something to sell. But God hadn't called us to advocate for anything or anyone – just to be faithful in what He had given us to do. So, we felt that we were to step back from the whirlwind of activity. It was no longer to be about “getting the word out to as many as would listen.” God was doing fine at extending His kingdom on the earth. So, I was in a bit of turmoil about whether I should speak at this specific conference. But then the Lord spoke very clearly to me that I should go. So, at the first meeting, I was sitting in the designated seating area reserved for those who would speak, and a man who was also going to be a speaker came and sat next to me. He had two young men walking behind him. One was carrying his Bible and the other his brief case. When I asked him, “*What is going on? These two young men –?one carrying your Bible, the other your brief case.*” He said, “*They are my armor bearers.*” I was shocked. “*Really. Doesn't that seem a bit Old Testament to you? Doesn't the New Testament teach that you should be carrying theirs? Jesus came to serve, not to be served.*” You know what he did? He moved his seat!

And this was someone who was influencing others from a leadership role in the realm of prophetic ministry in our nation.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would anoint prophets to give direction to certain individuals, or to the nations of Israel or Judah, or to their kings. Sometimes they prophesied over various Gentile nations as well. Very often it was directive, a rebuke for certain sins, or a correction of some sort. For example, when King David sinned with Bathsheba, God sent Nathan the prophet to confront him. When he realized that his sin was found out, he cried out to God, “*Take not Your Holy Spirit from me.*” In the Old Testament, only a few people here and there were anointed to prophesy. And David was one of them. But when those who prophesied sinned, the Holy Spirit could depart and lift off of their lives. Think of King Saul who had indeed prophesied at one time but who had then turned away in his heart. The Scripture says that Saul feared David because the Lord was with David and had departed from Saul (1Samuel 18:12).

New Testament Prophets

On the other hand, the New Testament teaches that with the death and resurrection of Christ, a new era began. Notice what the writer to the Hebrews said.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:1 – 2).

All through the Old Testament, the prophetic view was always looking forward in time. Someday the Messiah would come and everything would change. And this future hope rested on a promise made by Israel's God. And no matter how spiritual or obedient His people were, they simply could not come into the full stature of what He had in mind when He created man (Hebrews 11:39 – 40). But when Jesus arose from the dead, His instructions were clear. His followers were to wait for the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49). What God had promised was

now about to come from heaven into the hearts of His people. What was the promise? It was God Himself pouring out His own presence in a permanent abiding way into those who believed. An invasion of the earth from heaven began in Acts Chapter 2.

And this presence of God is given to all of His children with the promise to never leave or forsake us, ever. Talk about a commitment! Think of what Paul said to Timothy. *“God...has saved us and called us with a holy calling...”* (2 Timothy 1:9). In other words, if you are saved, then you are called – with a holy calling. And it is not according to anything that we can do or achieve on our own. It is all according to His grace and His purpose which He granted us in Christ before the world began. Therefore, when we begin to catch the New Testament vision, we see that we are *all* saved, that we are *all* called, and that we are *all* anointed.

“As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.” (1John 2:27)

The anointed One, Jesus the Christ has come into our lives and has begun to live His life in us and through us. And so, what often happens is that when others see Him making Himself known in our lives, they say, *“Wow, were you ever anointed today!”* But what they really mean is that they saw less of us and more of the Anointed One arising in us. But unfortunately, in many places, the anointing is described as “something that happens” when the Holy Spirit moves upon you.

One of the first times I ran into this was in Concord, NH. We were having a joint New Year’s Eve meeting with another church. We had gathered simply to worship. And when the meeting was over, we were all going to go downstairs and welcome in the new year with fellowship and eating a meal together. So, the pastor said to me, *“Owen, I have to go up and make some announcements. I’ll be right back.”* But when he got to the front, he said something like this. *“And (ah), refreshments are served (ah)!! Downstairs(ah)!”* with great emphasis on the words. I was thinking, *“What in the world was that?”* Afterward, I asked him about it and he said, *“That’s the Holy Spirit.”* But in my own mind I was thinking, *“I can’t imagine God walking around heaven going uh, ah, unhh, o, ah!”* In actuality, it was simply what I would call a learned Pentecostalism, an acquired way of speaking.

Unfortunately, while many brethren may claim that they believe in the centrality of Jesus, it seems that many do not understand the implications of that truth as it relates to how they should be integrated with the Church. And if they begin to sense that God is calling them to be a prophet, it then becomes easy for them to simply function like an Old Testament prophet. There are many examples of this on the internet today. But God intends to bring this important ministry into its proper New Testament role as revealed in the New Testament.

Just one obvious question is: “*What happens when a particular prophecy doesn’t come to pass?*” I called one of these well-known prophetic brothers and asked him that specific question. He said, “*Well, it is contingent on the person’s response to the word.*” I’m thinking, “*Oh. So, it’s their fault that you missed God!*” In the Old Testament, if your prophecy didn’t come to pass, the Scripture says that you should be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 18:20 – 22). Obviously, there were exceptions to the rule (e.g., think Nineveh in Jonah’s day or God changing His mind and deciding to give Hezekiah another fifteen years of life – 2Kings 20), yet God’s standard was clear. Prophets who misrepresented the Lord were held accountable in an ultimate sense – they paid with their lives. Maybe functioning like an Old Testament prophet is not so appealing after all.

So, today. Prophetic ministers will be invited to speak at a local church and will then give direction to the leaders and to the people there because that is what they think a prophet is supposed to do. Everyone then is strongly encouraged to honor what the prophet has spoken. But if what they have spoken does not come to pass, then it is seen as the people’s fault. Clearly, something has to change.

Where is the prophet’s accountability for what he is saying and doing?

The Whole Church is to be Prophetic

God has given His Holy Spirit to the whole Church so that we may all come to know His leading and direction. So, if any believer gives a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom concerning the direction of the church, that word should bear witness to the whole Body. When the Holy Spirit moves through His people, since He is not an author of confusion, He will bring clarity. And when He does, He will not be speaking only through one very gifted individual but rather through those who are led by the Spirit of God, the sons of God (Romans 8:14). Therefore, heavenly strategy requires that there be meetings where we come together to equip and train people to move in corporate prophetic accuracy. Genuine New Testament prophets will be key in such training.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. (Hebrews 1:1 – 2)

In the New Testament, God speaks to us in and through His Son. And His Son lives in each and every one of us. It seems that some have missed this foundational truth.

When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” (Matthew 11:1 – 3)

If we fail to understand how God uses affliction in our lives, we could then very easily find our perspective of Him and of His purpose negatively affected when we encounter adversity. This is what happened to John the Baptist. “*Are You really the One?*” Of course, John had announced that Jesus was the one Israel was waiting for. In fact, when he saw the Lord coming to him for baptism, he tried to stop Him. “*Lord, you should be baptizing me!*” But no. Jesus submitted to John’s baptism to fulfill all righteousness, to fulfill the Scriptures. So, when Jesus came up from the water, John immediately saw the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit coming down in bodily form as a dove upon Him. Clearly, John knew that Jesus was the Messiah. He then heard God the Father say, “*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*” Even though John had experienced such amazing events, yet from prison he found himself asking, “*Are You really the one?*”

Adversity can affect your perspective. This is why God’s people need edification, exhortation, and consolation.

So, Jesus responded to the disciples whom John had sent to question Him.

Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.” (Matthew 11:4 – 6)

End of the Old and Beginning of the New

As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ palaces! But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’ “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!” (Matthew 11:7 – 11)

Of all the prophets who ever lived, none were greater than John. Yet he still had doubts and questions at that moment. Think about it: Elijah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Abraham, Moses, and all the Old Testament prophets. None of these mighty men of faith were greater than John. In fact, while they were all prophets, he was more than a prophet. Why? Because all of them in their prophetic ministries pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah. But John actually introduced Him. And through him, the Kingdom of God could now come into a focused clarity.

But look at how Jesus concluded His instruction to the crowds.

Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:11)

If you feel like you might be the least in God's Kingdom, take encouragement from this thought. You are greater than the greatest prophets who ever lived. You are greater even than John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said that no one of Israel's mighty heroes of the faith were greater than him. What many people miss is that right here at this juncture in Matthew's gospel, God is giving us a snapshot of the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New. This specific conversation puts us on the pinnacle of the Old, as we consider John. But at the same time, we suddenly find our hearts staggered as it hits us that in considering Jesus, we are seeing the emerging of the New. Jesus had come to fulfill what was written and it was now happening for all to see.

Hear Him!!!

Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone. (Matthew 17:1-8)

Why did God have Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus? One reason is that it expressed a prophetic picture. Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the Old Testament prophets. And these two men representing the Law and the prophets met with Jesus and then disappeared leaving Jesus standing alone. The message? Their work in pointing forward to the coming of Christ was done. Now their lives, ministries, and prophetic words were to be seen as fulfilled in Him. Jesus would now be the focal point for interpreting all of scripture. Today we no longer build tabernacles or sacred tents to honor men. We have one Man, one Head of the Church, even Jesus Christ. Since the emphasis of the Bible is now all about the fulfillment of what was prophesied in the Old Testament – the coming of the Messiah and the establishing of his Kingdom on earth, the main work that we must be presently engaged in is quite simple – we must believe in Him.

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." (John 6:29).

The focus of the New Testament is that we believe in Christ, in His present work of bringing God's kingdom on earth. It is not coming in a way readily apparent to people (Luke 17:20), rather, it is coming in a hidden way, like leaven (Matthew 13:33). And if people are not born of the Spirit, they cannot even see it (John 3:3). So, the instruction of scripture is clear – we must believe!

One mark of failing to believe in Him is when we try to make His kingdom come, to make it happen. For some, the key to seeing kingdom growth is to go to the latest church growth seminar or to find the latest good ideas in a Christian publication on how to revolutionize their city for God. But God is saying, *“Pray for My kingdom to come and then receive it as it comes.”* And the key to it all is to hear Him. God's strategy is now available to everyone of us, even if we are in groups as small as two or three gathered in His name. When we come together, we can hear and respond to His leading to share from our hearts what He is revealing to us. We can read from scripture what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing. But it is all about hearing Him! Here is God's kingdom emphasis – hear Him. Why? Because His presence is now available to us all. It is not about some special man or woman. Jesus said that if you are the least in the Kingdom then you are greater than all the prophets of the Old Testament. Why would we ever want to change what He has purchased for us or go back into what predated it?

When Jesus Died on the Cross

And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. (Matthew 27:51 – 53)

Until Jesus died on the cross, heaven was closed. When you died, you went to the Netherworld, the place of departed spirits. In the Old Testament it was called Sheol. We know from the story of Lazarus and the rich man that there was a great chasm fixed between the righteous and the wicked (Luke 16:19 – 31). On one side of this void was Abraham's bosom and on the other side was Hades. When the righteous died, they went to Abraham's bosom; the wicked went to Hades. But when Jesus died, He descended into the place of the departed spirits and made proclamation of what He had just done (1Peter 3:19). Then when He ascended back to heaven, *“HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES”* (Ephesians 4:8).

He was leading the way for the righteous into the very presence of God in heaven. In fact, when He died on the cross, the tombs of many righteous ones were opened and after His resurrection, they appeared on the streets of Jerusalem. (Matthew 27:52 – 53). Someone might have been walking in the city and suddenly saw a familiar face. *“Wait, you look like Uncle Leroy!”* And the person might have said, *“I am Uncle Leroy!”* AAAAAAhhhhh! But the Good News is that heaven was now accessible and open in a way it never was before.

It is true that not all believers are called to be prophets but all are to be prophetic. All may not be evangelists but all are to be evangelistic. All may not be teachers but all are called to teach. We may not all be apostles but we are all called to be apostolic. When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles to proclaim the Kingdom of God, they came back and gave an account of what they had done (Luke 9:1 – 6, 10). But then soon afterward, He sent out seventy more of those who followed Him (Luke 10:1 – 16). Did that mean that now there were eighty-two apostles? No. In the first group He was equipping and training apostles; in the second, He was equipping followers to be apostolic. God’s vision is for the whole Church of Christ to become an apostolic people.

The five ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11 are not positions or offices for some leaders to hold in God’s Church. Rather, they are descriptions of leaders to whom God has simply given some measure of His grace. As they each learn to function in the grace that He has given to them, God will through them equip His people for the work of serving others resulting in Christ’s body being edified/built up. The work of serving reveals Christ. Many folks have missed the fact that the King of the universe is a foot washer. He did not come to be served, but to serve and we are all to be equipped to do the same (John 13:12 – 17; Matthew 20:25 – 28).

Peter writes about his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration:

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” — and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. (2Peter 1:16 – 19)

I don’t think Peter fully understood what was happening when he was on that mountain. After he made the suggestion about setting up a few tents, God responded with the words, “Hear Him!” I can imagine Peter thinking, “Well I do. I hear Him every day.” But the words from heaven continued to echo in his heart. “Hear Him!” Later, he realized that God had been speaking sovereignly from heaven not just to him but through him to all who would listen. The truth is that we all need God instructing and equipping us to “hear Him.” For Peter, the day dawned and the morning star arose in his heart (the lights went on in him/it clicked) and from that point on, his whole focus in life was to hear Him.

When Revelation Comes

Some years ago, I was mentoring a young man who was conducting a Bible study in our city with some other men. One day when we got together, it was

clear that he was frustrated with the brethren in the study group. *“Why don’t they get it? All these truths that God has shown you and I that are central to our lives. I try to share these with them and they look at me like I have three eyes!”* I asked, *“Well, how did you come to understand these truths?”* His response was, *“What?”* *“How did it happen for you?”* I repeated. His response was, *“God showed it to me.”* So, I replied, *“Are you God now? Can you give revelation? Before you meet with those folks do you pray and ask for a spirit of wisdom and revelation to come upon that meeting? Think of what Paul was doing when he wrote the book of Ephesians. He said,*

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.”
(Ephesians 1:17 HCSB)

Think of it. Even when a man was writing the inerrant word of God, more was needed. The Ephesians needed the Spirit of God to come upon them as they read what Paul wrote! God was needed in both the writing and then the reading of His word.

From that point on, this young man would pray regularly for revelation to come to those in the study group. And when he shared the truths that God had revealed to him, some of them began to see with increased clarity. Clearly, we all need God to open up His word to us so that we can see Him in it. Genuine kingdom insight comes by revelation, and revelation comes by His mercy. And if that is true, why would we ever act like we are better than others who do not see what we do? As if our insight is our own personal possession that we somehow earned! All of us need to start praying that God would give us wisdom and revelation. Revelation simply means that we begin to see truth that we would never have perceived if God had not shown us. And then wisdom is what God gives us so that we can know what to do with what we now see.

It was so encouraging to me when this dear brother stepped up into a new place of insight and was able to help equip those in his study group in seeing the Lord. In other words, the day dawned in his heart, the morning star arose, it clicked for him just like it had for Peter.

Paul experienced the same process. Referring to the gospel that he preached, he said:

For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:12)

I don’t mean to be hard on these men and women who say that they are prophets or prophetesses and yet define it all by the Old Testament. What they are saying is probably based on what they have been taught. But something needs to click in their hearts. When that happens, they will go about their ministries differently. If we are to consider just what a New Testament prophet looks like, let us center our answers in the New Testament.

What Does a New Testament Prophet Do?

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19 –22)

The foundation of the house that God is building to reveal His glory is laid by His apostles and prophets. Exactly who or what is the foundation? Is it a set of doctrinal principles? Paul was clear.

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1Corinthians 3:11)

The person of Jesus Christ is that foundation. The Scriptures say that God has already established Him as the precious Stone upon which He is building (Isaiah 28:16). But since Calvary, God has been releasing His grace through His apostles and prophets to reveal that reality – not just to talk about it but to make it manifest. Their unique calling is to bear Christ's presence into situations in such a way that His people seek to gather to and around Him as the center of both their individual lives and then also their corporate lives. This means that organizational approaches to building God's house must cease. His people must move forward in only one way; we must hear Him. Strong singular leaders of churches and streams of churches must make way for Christ to be central in the leadership role. Only He can be the head. Only He can be the Chief Shepherd.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11 – 12)

The Body of Christ will grow if overseers will release their grip. They must oversee/watch over God's people, not control them. Of course, such an approach means that if the people have the liberty to speak, then the leaders must have the liberty to bring correction when necessary. Proper oversight will lead not to spiritual anarchy but to Christ being revealed in His people, rather than just in a few leaders. And so, our job is to equip and teach believers how to serve like Jesus did. Some leaders have taken the five-fold ministries (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher) and made them into official positions in the Church. The words apostle or prophet etc. then become titles expressing their authority. But they are not official positions to be held; they are equipping functions empowered by the grace of God. Jesus gave these gifts to His corporate body when He ascended back to heaven. And He did so to prepare us so that the whole Church can come forth in active service. When this process happens, everybody plays a part because we are all to be prophetic/apostolic/pastoral etc. These ministries simply teach us how to connect relationally with the founda-

tion of God's house, with the living person of Jesus Christ, and then to serve like He served in whatever capacity He has called each of us.

Gifts of the Spirit

Just like men have misapplied the role of the five-fold ministries, so also have they done with the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:8 – 10) by “over-specializing” them. For example, someone receives a word of knowledge in one of the gatherings and all of a sudden that person then becomes the special one to seek out if we need a word from God. But what if he is not in the meeting on the day of our need? Do we just walk away without having connected with the Lord? The truth is that these spiritual gifts are given to the whole church; they are for everybody.

Here is how I see that we are to move in the Spirit. Paul says:

For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted. (1 Corinthians 14:31)

Prophetic ministry (which also includes words of knowledge, words of wisdom as well as interpretation of tongues) is for all of us to experience. It is not about individuals who promote themselves/their ministries and then represent themselves as unique among the brethren. “Oh he/she's a specialist, let's seek them out.” In fact, it is not really about them at all; it is about Jesus and His coming to have first place in everything. Genuine New Testament prophets will have this goal – to see Christ miraculously revealed in His body through a diverse yet humbly submitted and integrated people.

I see prophecy as similar to how a faucet works with water. Paul says it this way.

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. (1 Corinthians 14:3)

So how does it work? The Lord will impress a certain person on my heart. So, I go to them with the purpose of edifying, exhorting, or consoling them. All of us have done the very same thing at some point in our walk with God. We wanted to encourage someone, so we spoke encouragement to them. We wanted to console or edify someone, so we did so. For many, without realizing it, we were actually prophesying to others. It is really quite simple. Men have complicated it. So, I see prophecy as water flowing through a faucet. I go to edify, console, or exhort someone. I lay my hand on them and I open the faucet. As I begin praying, suddenly from up out of my heart flows the water of life as a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, a word of faith, or a word of healing. It really is that simple and we can all do it. We can all prophesy. Such ministry is not for a special few; it is for all. In the New Testament, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for everybody.

I am not against education; we all need to learn at the feet of others. But some people put more trust and confidence in their education than in the leading of the Holy Spirit. Thank God for Saul of Tarsus. This amazing man had more degrees

than a thermometer. He studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), one of Israel's greatest teachers. He wrote in Philippians 3:5 – 6 that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, a zealous persecutor of the Church, and concerning the Law, found blameless. If anybody had vision, Saul of Tarsus did. He was going to kill anybody who had a different hermeneutic and got in his way. In Acts Chapter 9 he was getting letters of authorization to put Christians into jail. He was absolutely committed to destroying them – until he ran into Jesus Christ on the Damascus road where the glorious light of God blinded him. And he heard this voice, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”* I am sure that he immediately began thinking, *“Whoever that is, I am sure that it is God.”* So, he said, *“Who are You, Lord?”* I'll bet he thought, *“Just don't be Jesus.”* How do you think he felt when the Lord answered him that the One to whom he was talking was in fact, Jesus? And the Lord left him blind for three days because He wanted Paul to come to Him, to wait upon Him, and to hear Him. Hallelujah. Paul needed a revelation of Jesus.

And all of his previous status that he had attained through education? Saul laid it all on the dung heap for the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:4 – 11). On that Damascus road, he had a “collision of vision” (Acts 9:1 – 9). The vision he had for his own life within Judaism was shattered when He suddenly beheld the heavenly vision of Christ.

After these events, Paul had to go to the back side of the desert and unlearn and then relearn, to work through the implications of the collapse of one vision as another one from heaven began to permeate his soul. Many today are having a similar vision collision. Many are coming out of religious systems where men function at the head and Christ is not being revealed through His body. And deep down inside, they know that there must be more. Indeed, God does have more for His people than simply going to a building once a week and listening to a sermon that they never do anything with. They are beginning to realize that there must be more than a simple religious experience. Something inside of them is churning. All believers know that God has more for us than what we have yet realized (Romans 8:23 – 29). In fact, all of creation knows that there is yet more to be revealed from the work of God among His people (Romans 8:19). Where is this awareness rising from? It is the Holy Spirit Himself who is saying, *“There is more”* (Romans 8:26).

After Paul was healed from being blinded and then filled with the Holy Spirit, he tried to connect with the Lord's disciples to tell them he had been wrong and that they had been right. But they didn't want anything to do with him. Even Ananias, when the Lord told him, *“I want you to go to Damascus. There is a man there who's been blinded. I did it. I want you to go lay hands on him so that he can receive his sight back.”* *“Oh okay, who is it?”* *“Saul of Tarsus.”* *“Uh oh, time out, Lord. He kills Christians and I'm a Christian.”* But in spite of his fears, Ananias was hearing the Lord accurately. So, he got up, went to Damascus, and changed the world.

Paul not only received his physical sight when Ananias prayed for him, he was now also beginning to see in a realm that was wholly new to him – it is called the realm of the Spirit (Greek, PNEUMATIKOS).

Now concerning spiritual gifts (Greek, PNEUMATIKOS), brethren, I do not want you to be unaware (Greek, AGNOEO). (1Corinthians 12:1)

The Greek word AGNOEO means to be ignorant, to not know. And it is the same word used concerning the realms of both the Spirit and the demonic.

that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant (Greek, AGNOEO) of his schemes. (2Corinthians 2:11)

God wants us to understand both how the enemy works as well as how God works. We must learn the realm of the Holy Spirit that God has immersed us into. In 1Corinthians 12, Paul lists the gifts of the Spirit and how the body of Christ is to function. Then in 1Corinthians 13, he gives us the proper motive for how we are to function – love. But in Chapter 14:1, he sums up his thoughts when he says,

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts... (Greek, PNEUMATIKOS)

Desire the realm of the Spirit. In the original Greek, the word “gifts” is not there. The translators added it into the sentence because they thought it would clarify Paul’s thinking. But when they did so, something got lost. Paul was talking not only about specific gifts of the Spirit, but that we are to desire to be in the realm of the Spirit. Why? Because it is, “*in Him we live and move and have our being*” (Acts 17:28 NKJV).

Consider Jesus when He stood before Pilate. Pilate asked Him, “*Are You the King of the Jews?*” (John 18:33). And Jesus answered, “*Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?*” (John 18:34). Pilate responded, “*Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?*” (John 18:35). Notice Jesus’ response. “*My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.*” (John 18:36).

Christ’s kingdom is from heaven and we are now citizens in that kingdom. As a result, though we are still in this world, we are not of it; we are born of God. After Jesus died and rose from the dead, He actually walked through closed doors and yet also partook of food with His disciples (Luke 24:36 – 43). And they were stunned as they interacted with Him. So also, when we die, the world and the things of this world will pass away and we will be with Him in that other realm (Ecclesiastes 12:7 – 8). But God is calling us to taste of that realm now, to participate in the power and wisdom of that realm now, to lay aside our tendency to prioritize the issues of this life, and to hunger for the realm of the Spirit.

We Are Only Fools in the Eyes of This World

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise... (1Corinthians 1:26 – 27)

If you want to know what the foolish things of this world look like, look in the mirror. He has chosen us – we who are foolish and weak, in order to shame the strong and mighty.

and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.” (1Corinthians 1:27 – 31)

It really is all about Jesus. It is not about us, or our gifts, or our ministries, or our education. Heaven’s focus, the focus of the entire realm of the Spirit is simply Jesus. And all of human history is heading toward this ultimate goal, that this One, “*the firstborn from the dead, ...will come to have first place in everything*” (Colossians 1:18).

but just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, (1Corinthians 2:9 – 12)

God wants us to know the depths of His heart and the wealth of heaven that His Spirit/His presence has freely brought to us. This is what Paul realized. In the very next verse, he went on to say that those things which the Spirit had revealed to him were what he spoke about (1Corinthians 2:13). His gospel set men free because its source was heaven. The challenge now falls to us. We too must listen, discern, and then speak of the spiritual riches freely given to us by God.

No human eye has seen nor has any human ear heard the depths of the heart of God. Yet, God reveals them. Do you want to know what God has freely given to you? Then ask, seek, and knock.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Matthew 7:7 – 8)

But often when we have asked the Lord about something for a couple of times and nothing seems to be happening, we tend to quit. However, the Lord wants to encourage us, “*You have need of endurance. Learn how to persevere by finding Me there with you in the circumstance.*” In fact, the Greek could be more literally translated as, “Ask, and keep on asking; seek, and keep on seeking; knock, and keep on knocking.”

The Holy Spirit

The Spirit has been given to us so that we might know all the things freely given to us by God (1Corinthians 2:12). God’s divine order is not that one highly gifted person has massive insight into the wealth of heaven and everyone else has to receive it from them. No. God calls us *all* to know the things He has freely given to us. His strategy is not to give insight simply to a select few and then they dictate to everybody else what He is saying. That is how the Old Testament worked. In the New Testament, He has poured out His presence in *all* of us. And when He speaks in our midst, we *all* bear witness to what He is saying and doing.

For example, when the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “*Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*” (Acts 13:2). Scripture does not say who actually gave that prophetic word. But it seems that the whole church responded with fasting and prayer, and then laid their hands on them and then “sent them away”. The Greek word (APOLUO) actually means they released them. To be clear, it was not an individual leader who made this decision nor was it an organizational committee that implemented it. The next verse says, “*So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit...*” (Acts 13:4). Interestingly, the Greek word here for “being sent out” is (EKPEMPO) meaning to “send forth.” So, the people of God *released* the men that the Holy Spirit was sending on His mission. But through it all, it was the Holy Spirit operating in and through His people that resulted in this strategic apostolic mission.

What we see in this event was the whole church being apostolic and prophetic. All were involved in hearing the Lord, bearing witness with what He was saying, and then releasing into strategic ministry those whom the Lord was sending. The mission field would then be the proving grounds for whether Paul and Barnabas were actually apostles or not. And when they returned from their journey, they assembled the whole church and then gave an account of the work that they had accomplished (Acts 14:26 – 28). Notice that they did not report to a committee. These men were not part of an organization. They did not function according to some official titles that they held. They were simply men filled with the Holy Spirit walking together with many others who were also filled with the Spirit who had recognized the work of God in them. They had been sent by the Holy Spirit, they were led while on their journey by the Holy Spirit, and they returned to give an account for what He had accomplished through them.

which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ. (1Corinthians 2:13 – 16)

Think about it: Noah looked foolish building an ark where there had been no rain; Sarah looked foolish believing that she would conceive at the age of ninety; Moses looked foolish asking Pharaoh to let his slaves go free; the Israelite army looked foolish marching around Jericho while blowing trumpets; David looked foolish attacking Goliath with a sling shot; the wisemen looked foolish following a star; Peter looked foolish stepping out of a boat in the middle of a storm; and Jesus looked foolish hanging half naked on a cross.

But look at the results. Noah and his family stayed afloat during a massive and destructive flood; Sarah gave birth to Isaac; Moses delivered Israel out of Egypt; the walls of Jericho came tumbling down; David defeated Goliath; the wisemen found the Messiah; Peter walked on water; and Jesus rose from the dead.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. (1Corinthians 3:1 – 7)

Sometimes we struggle with these verses. Those who plant and water are nothing? Yes. When it comes to making things grow in God's kingdom, we are totally dependent on Him. And our tendency is that if we do not walk in harmony with the Holy Spirit, we will align ourselves with men – just like the Corinthians had. We will want to follow somebody who sounds like they have it all together and who seems quite successful in Christian ministry. Then we can say, "Yeah, that's us. We're with him." But that isn't us! We are simply who we are. When we look in the mirror, what do we see? Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, but a people weak and foolish in ourselves, a people made from the dust of the ground yet filled with the Holy Spirit. God's way of accomplishing His purpose using the people that He has chosen to work with will have the result of Him getting the glory.

Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:8 – 11)

Paul was well versed in laws and rules. He had tried religious devotion and legalistic activities. But nothing worked. However, when he embraced what he was most afraid of – the person of Jesus Christ, the Lord came into his life and changed him from the inside out. Again, after meeting Him, he had to unlearn and then relearn. But as he did so, he became powerful in the Spirit. When he then went to minister at Corinth, he didn't go there with persuasive words but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power so that their faith would not rest on man's wisdom but on the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:3 – 4).

A New Testament Prophet's primary service to the Body of Christ is to equip men and women to live their lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ – to learn to hear Him. And then once they have equipped people through instruction and then through practice in learning to hear His voice, the people can then build upon that foundation by living a life of intimate response to what He is saying. Notice Jesus' own words.

Why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great. (Luke 6:46 – 49)

My friend Mike Worsley was a minister for 30 years. He knew that he was called to be a prophet but leaders in the various churches where he had served limited him in what he could say or do. He knew that God was calling His people to come into intimacy with Himself, so Mike preached and prophesied words that God gave him on that theme regularly. But it began to dawn on him that the people did not know how to actually get on the foundation and then live there. And he was not sure how to equip them to do so. Then, like Saul of Tarsus, he ran into Jesus Christ. That experience literally set him free, and he now functions in a freedom that he had previously only dreamed about. He now sees God's strategy of equipping folks to get on the foundation and to hear from the Lord for themselves. Once they are established on the foundation, they no longer have to rely on him to know what the Spirit is saying. Establishing people on Christ has re-

leased Mike to be all that God has called him to be as well as those he has been training to be all that God has called them to be.

Conclusion

There is no foundation other than Jesus. Are you building your life on an intimate relationship with Him?

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Ephesians 5:15 – 21)

We must realize that we are in a great spiritual battle.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

We are in a battle spanning the ages of time. One main opponent we face is the religious spirit. It was the religious spirit that stirred men to reject Jesus and then to cry out for His crucifixion. It was the religious spirit that killed the apostles. And it was the religious spirit that stirred up men to throw Paul in jail. The spiritual conflict we are in today can be seen in Paul's words to the Galatians. The enemy was drawing them toward a religious legalism and the apostle challenged them to reject that direction and to yield to the Holy Spirit and be led by Him (Galatians 3:1 – 5). To drive his point home, he drew their attention to the Scriptures – specifically, the story about Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac (Galatians 4:19 – 31). Ishmael, the son born according to the flesh persecuted Isaac, the one born according to the Spirit. What the Galatians needed to see was that they were experiencing the same conflict that Isaac had. And as it was then, so it is now. The religious spirit will always persecute those who desire to be free.

If you believe that God has called you to be a prophet, please recognize that if the enemy cannot keep you bound to some particular sin, then he will try to get you bound to a religious system. His purpose will be to either paralyze you *from* functioning or to misdirect you in your functioning into being defined by a system. Then as you succeed to some degree before others there, the result could very well be that you become something other than what God intended. The question then becomes, “*How do you unveil the foundation of Christ so that He becomes central not only in individual lives but also in the corporate functioning of the church?*” The very system itself will militate against such a result. Then the pressure to compromise can become very real. Spiritually gifted prophets who have been affected by a religious system must begin to transition

to being prophets of Christ, with no agenda but Him. Such a change can be costly, as my friend Mike has discovered.

All of us today are facing some degree of internal struggle. While the world system is shaking and crumbling, and at the same time throwing at us pressure to conform, to “get with the program,” at the same time, many in the Church of Christ are facing a very similar pressure to conform. But the Church should be the last place where we have to face such an external controlling pressure.

At the same time, there must be accountability. Prophets must walk in submitted and accountable relationships with other five-fold ministries/elders at the local church level. There they can walk out the implications of Christ’s headship as it is revealed in the midst of diversity. God’s strategy is that submitted hearts would learn how to yield to each other so that the One who is both greater than each one and also greater than all combined can be made known through God’s miracle – a corporate body revealing one mind, even the mind of Christ. Prophets must make this transition or they will continue to function like Old Testament prophets in a New Testament era. But as they submit to the Lord in these things, they will discover who they are within the parameters of the apostolic vision laid out in the New Testament.

Keep in mind that God wants to reveal who He is in us and also who we are in Him. And the last thing the enemy wants is for us to know who we are in Christ. Again, God’s strategy is not to simply fill our heads with knowledge but to grant us clear understanding of who we are and what our equipping service to the body of Christ is. And the clearer we see, the greater freedom we will find.

In order to be free, you must, “*trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight*” (Proverbs 3:5 – 6).

Once free, Paul wrote concerning the gospel,

of which I was made a minister (Greek, DIAKONOS – a servant, a waiter), according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:7 – 11)

Jesus wants to make a proclamation of His manifold wisdom through His Church, through the likes of you and me. In other words, the body of Christ must become more than a theological idea. We must become a living demonstration of what God says we are – a living body expressing one mind. We have coined the term “body-ness” to describe when it is working, when many are all func-

tioning together as one. It is truly miraculous and only God can produce it. But it is the goal to which He is bringing His people. Some in leadership are concerned about losing control of what occurs in the gatherings. But we know that if we all remain humble, and if we keep our hearts right, the love of God will control us. And He will teach us. Remember, He intends to make His wisdom known through His Church, not just through certain gifted leaders/prophets/apostles. Paul talks about such freedom in the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians Chapter 14 but then concludes in verse 40 with the words, “*But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.*”

Freedom and Order. God wants His people to experience both. And both are needed for proper understanding of His work among us. When Christ is more revealed among us as the foundation for both our individual and corporate lives, we will be able to see our way forward.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:9 – 14)

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

Man tends to build in God’s house with bricks (conformity and uniformity); God builds with living stones (unique diversity with each one personally fashioned by His hand yet integrated with others in connected accountability).

When Jesus died, the veil of the Temple was rent. We now no longer need somebody to go in before God in our place; we can all enter boldly into the very presence of God to receive His mercy and find the grace we need to help us in our times of need. Boldly! Not arrogantly, but confidently, every day. All the time. (1 Peter 2:4 – 5)

Remember the word that I said to you, “A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.” (John 15:20 – 21)

In recent years, God has been shaking the nations and exposing the hearts of men (Haggai 2:7). It is a time of upheaval. If ever there was a time for the Church to come into her God–designed and God–purposed calling, it is now. We

simply must cry out for the Lord Jesus to arise in His glory in our midst. How we need Him to be for us the stability of our times (Isaiah 33:6). In seeing Him in His rightful place among us, we will see how the body is to function and, specifically how the prophets and other ministries are to serve so that He can bring us, *“to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:13). Amen.

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