

## UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES - Part 7: Old Testament vs. New Testament Prophets

Now these were the numbers of the divisions that were equipped for war, and came to David at Hebron to turn over the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD...of the sons of Issachar who had **understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do**, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command. (1 Chr 12:23, 32 NKJV)

**Spiritual Maturity...**Knowing who you are, what you're here for,  
and how life in the kingdom of God works!

### Ten-Week Study on UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

- Week 1: Seeing "The Big Picture" **DONE**
- Week 2: God's Kingdom vs. The Culture **DONE**
- Week 3: The Fear of the Lord Is The Beginning of Wisdom **DONE**
- Week 4: God's Word Is the Plumb Line For Everything **DONE**
- Week 5: God's Heart For Seers **DONE**
- Week 6: Desiring the Greater Gifts **DONE**
- Week 7: Old Testament vs. New Testament Prophets **TODAY**
- Week 8: Interpreting What You See
- Week 9: Applying What You've Interpreted
- Week 10: Walking In Discernment

### Old Testament vs. New Testament Prophets

#### - Recap of Week 6

- **Spiritual Gifts**: Better translated, "spirituals," or "the things the Holy Spirit does!" So, what are the "greater gifts" Paul is encouraging us to eagerly desire?
- The NLT calls them "the most helpful gifts." (1 Cor 12:31)
- Then, in *Chapter 14*, the Apostle Paul paints a picture of how the church should function when we gather together. Prophecy seems to be an important element in our gatherings.
- **Question**: Why do you think the Devil might want to shut down prophetic gifts in the church?
- If prophecy in the church is as important as Paul seems to say it is in 1 Cor 12-14, **shouldn't we diligently seek to understand as much as we can about how it works and how to steward it?**

#### - Prophecy in the Old Testament

- The Old Covenant shows us that **our sins deserved to be punished** and **justice came through judgement**. More to the point, it revealed our need for a savior.
- One of the key scriptures that reveal the **seriousness** of the OT prophet's role is found in Deuteronomy 18. People often quote verse 20 when wanting to apply these guidelines to NT prophetic voices...
  - <sup>18</sup> I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. <sup>19</sup> I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. <sup>20</sup> But **any prophet who falsely claims to speak in my name or who speaks in the name of another god must die.** (Deut 18:18-20 NLT-SE)

- These same people move swiftly past what the Lord warns in verse 19. It says that if you don't heed the words of the prophesy, **YOU** would be dealt with, like the prophet who prophesied falsely!
- What were **the tests** used in the Old Testament to determine whether a prophet were speaking God's words?
  - First, the prophet's message had to **line up** with God's character and His Word.
  - Second, his prophecy must **come true**.
- **What changed at the Cross?**
  - The **testimony of Jesus** is the very essence of prophecy. **WE ARE IN CHRIST, LEARNING TO BECOME CHRISTLIKE.** (EPH 2:10, COL 3:1)
  - **Matt 5:17**...Jesus said he came to fulfill the law and the prophets.
    - "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, **I came to accomplish their purpose.** (Matt 5:17 NLT-SE)
    - **Pre-Cross**, there was one race of people who could live with God and the Spirit of God could come "on them."
    - **After the Cross** there is an entirely new race of people brought into the earth who have never been seen before, literally a "**new creation.**" We don't have the presence of God on us. We have the presence of God "in us," coming through us. The gospel is a gospel of grace, of goodness. It's a gospel of "good news."

~ Graham Cooke

- **Acts 19**...Paul sees something strange in the church and digs a little to find out where the problem lies...
  - <sup>1</sup> While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. <sup>2</sup> "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them. "No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."
  - <sup>3</sup> "Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked. And they replied, "The baptism of John."
  - <sup>4</sup> Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus."
  - <sup>5</sup> As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:1-6 NLT-SE)
- Jesus isn't saying there are **no prophets**, but that the prophets have **a different job description** in the New Covenant.
  - There are only 3 named prophets in the New Testament and about 30-40 in the Old Testament. So, **most modern-day prophets tend to take their cues from Old Testament models.**
  - If you do that you end up prophesying from the **wrong age** and with the **wrong core values.**
- **John was the last prophet of an old covenant.** There are a lot of people still singing John's song (the funeral march), but we were not called to be baptized into John's baptism, but the baptism of Jesus! The baptism of Jesus isn't the baptism of **repentance**, but the baptism of death and **resurrection** (new life).
  - The people who sought John's baptism were seeking **forgiveness of their sins**, those who came for Jesus' baptism were coming to receive **New Life!**
  - Up until John, **the law and the prophets** were preached, but since John **the kingdom is being preached.**
- **New Testament Prophets**
  - There is a distinct **absence of judgement** in the New Covenant. There are **two questions** every true Believer should answer:

- Was Jesus **judged** enough for sin?
- Was Jesus **punished** enough for sin?
- **If the answer to those questions was “yes” there is no room for judgement in this life!** Between the judgement at Calvary (when Jesus paid the price for all sin) and the final judgement (when the New Heaven and a New Earth are revealed and all the books are opened) there is no place for judgement in this world.
- **2 Cor 5:17-18**...Here we see a **pivotal change or transition**. God no longer counts our trespasses against us. The prophetic message changed in the New Testament. This is completely different than what existed in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, your trespasses **were** counted against you! Again, the purpose of the Old Covenant was to convince you that you needed a savior.
  - <sup>17</sup> This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! <sup>18</sup> And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. <sup>19</sup> For **God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them**. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:17–19 NLT-SE)
- **Luke 16:16**...It looks like Jesus is saying there would be **no more need for prophets** from reading this verse.
  - “Until John the Baptist, the law of Moses and the messages of the prophets were your guides. But now **the Good News of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is eager to get in**. (Luke 16:16 NLT-SE)
  - What He is saying is that the covenant of judgement was no longer needed. This issue was **fully satisfied and settled at the Cross**.
- What would happen if you **took an Old Testament prophet and placed them in the new covenant?** We actually have an example of that!
  - <sup>5</sup> “Look, **I am sending you the prophet Elijah** before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives. <sup>6</sup> His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse.” (Mal 4:5–6 NLT-SE)
  - **What did Elijah do on the Old Testament side of the cross?** Cause famines, kill false prophets, prophesied judgements against nations, etc.
  - **What does Elijah do after the cross?** He reconciles fathers and sons! Why? Because prophets no longer have the ministry of **judgement**, but **reconciliation**. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation!
    - <sup>17</sup> Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come! <sup>18</sup> But all things are from God, Who through Jesus Christ reconciled us to Himself [received us into favor, brought us into harmony with Himself] and gave to us the **ministry of reconciliation** [that by word and deed we might aim to bring others into harmony with Him]. (2 Cor 5:17–18 AMP)
  - So, when you move a prophet from the Old Testament to the New Testament, **you change his job description!** In the Old Testament, he sang the funeral song. (Matt 11:17, Luke 7:32)
    - **“You Deserve To Die”** is the name of the song.
    - **John sang the funeral song** and he lost his head. He lost his head by condemning a king for marrying his brother’s wife; by bringing justice to the king through judgement, and when he did, he lost his head.
- Again, look at Paul’s description of prophecy in 1 Cor 14. Prophecy is for **building up** the church, **not judging it**.
  - <sup>1</sup> Let love be your highest goal! But **you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy**. <sup>2</sup> For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won’t be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. <sup>3</sup> **But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them**. <sup>4</sup> A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but **one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church**. (1 Cor 14:1–4 NLT-SE)

- Another way of saying this is that New Testament prophetic gifts are given to the church to **build us up, stir us up, and cheer us up!**

- **Gift of Prophecy vs. Office of Prophet**

- **5-Fold Ministry:** Holy Spirit gives the gifts in 1 Cor 12. Jesus gives the leaders in Eph 4 to the church so that the
  - <sup>11</sup> Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. (Eph 4:11–12 NLT-SE)
  - The primary responsibility of all these leaders is to **equip the body to take care of themselves.**
    - The greatest responsibility of the **evangelist** is to equip and release the saints to ***do evangelism.***
    - The greatest responsibility of the **pastor** is to equip and release the saints to ***take care of one another.***
    - The greatest responsibility of the **prophet** is to equip and release the saints to ***have eyes to see and ears to hear the Father themselves.***
    - The greatest responsibility of the **teacher** is to equip and release the saints to ***get food for themselves from the Bible.***
  - The **goal** of the five-fold ministry is not to do the work for you, but to equip you **to do the work for yourself.** The goal is that **the Body builds itself up in love.**
- **Ephesians 4...**says that **Jesus gave prophets to the church as gifts.** He said it would continue until we all look like Christ. Pretty sure that hasn't happened yet!
  - <sup>11</sup> Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> This will continue **until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.** (Eph 4:11–13 NLT-SE)

- **False Prophet vs. Poor Prophecy**

- **Prophecy should set us free, not imprison us!** (2 Cor 3:17, Gal 5:13, 1 Pet 2:16)
- **"False prophecy** is a very deliberate **leading people astray** from the truth of the gospel and the nature of God, leaving them in this no-mans land of guilt condemnation and shame." Graham Cooke
- **Poor prophesy** usually comes out of a deficient understanding of the character of God, especially people "moving in judgement." Poor prophecy leaves people feeling condemned, ashamed and on the wrong side of God's grace. Biblical prophecy tells people the truth about who they are in Christ and encourages them to that end.
- It's more important for us to **develop and nurture a prophetic culture** than to raise up prophets. A prophetic culture is not afraid to provide a ref and coach for prophecy.