

How We Can Judge Prophets and Prophecy

A certain prophetic ministry conducts a three-day workshop in local churches. But here's where some of these ministries err. Not all prophecy is from heaven to earth or from God to man. There is a big element of prophecy that is from earth to heaven or even earth to earth. For example, speaking or singing in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to the Lord is prophecy. This can also be done in ministry to one another (Col. 3:16). Preaching and teaching by divine inspiration is also prophetic in nature. Anytime someone speaks by divine inspiration, there is a measure of prophecy in it.

I believe we do a great disservice to the body of Christ when we relegate all prophecy as being from heaven to earth. Often what happens then is believers start assuming they are prophets, and they begin to attempt to move into predictive prophecy or foretelling. This abuse and extremism is one of the reasons the prophetic movement has been misunderstood and sensationalized.

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Areas Where Prophets Err

In addition to prophecy, which is the simple gift of edification, exhortation and comfort (forthtelling, not foretelling), prophets are anointed with at least two of the three revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit (word of wisdom, word of knowledge and/or discerning of spirits). In other words, they will function regularly in these gifts as the

Spirit wills, and not as they will.

This is another area where prophets err. They think they can operate these gifts at will. Attempts to do so have moved some of them into a performance mode where they give place to familiar spirits. For instance, when a so-called prophet receives a person's name, phone number or address, most of the time it is a familiar spirit giving the "prophet" that information. Unlike God, familiar spirits don't know everything, but they do know some things about people.

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Additionally, giving out a name, phone number or address of a person is usually outside of divine purpose. This mainly draws attention to the man and not the Lord. The drawing attention to oneself is the pit into which many prophets have fallen. In continents like Africa where common people are more susceptible, false prophets have polluted the landscape of Christianity. It's a mess, yet that still doesn't do away with the real. But Jesus said we would see many false prophets in these last days.

Titles and Performance

The excessive use of titles is another area that has moved prophets and all ministers into a performance mode. When they are introduced by a title, they feel the pressure to live up to it, and they start performing. Again, this accommodates familiar spirits. Decades ago, titles were not tossed around so readily and with such excess as they are today. To me, this too is a sign of the last days. Men strut in pomp and pageantry and love the preeminence and use of titles.

A casual observer will be unaware of these things. They may not even notice such and are thus unable to discern the true from the false. But every saint has an anointing that cannot lie and teaches him all things (1 John 2:20, 27). Let's be

sensitive to the anointing that abides within us so we will not fall prey to the falsehood that is rampant in the world and church of today.{eoa}

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Bert Farias' books are forerunners to personal holiness, the move of God and the return of the Lord. They also combat the departure from the faith and the turning away from the truth we are seeing in our day. His recent five-book bundle, written under a fresh anointing, is a forerunner of what the Lord is doing in His church today.