

Robert Morris: 'I Don't Need a Prophet'

I heard Robert Morris, Senior Pastor at Gateway Church in Southlake, Texas, tell of an individual approaching him and saying, "You have a lot of good leaders around you, but you don't have a prophet." Morris said he replied, "I don't need a prophet; I have the Holy Spirit."

Morris obviously understands the great difference between the function of prophecy under the Old Covenant and now under the New. With the inauguration of the New Covenant and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, everything changed. Understanding this change is vital for the contemporary church to walk in truth and experience the fulness of prophetic ministry.

We Must Shift Our Thinking

In the Old Testament, the work of the Holy Spirit was confined and limited to certain prophets, judges and kings such as Moses, Deborah, Gideon, Samuel, David and Elijah. The masses had neither the Bible nor the Holy Spirit, and so had to enquire of a prophet in order to hear from God.

Old Testament prophets, however, spoke of a coming change. Moses, for example, expressed a desire that the time would come when, "All the LORD'S people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them" (Num. 11:29). God spoke through Joel of a time when this would happen, saying, "I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh and your sons and your daughters will prophesy . . ." (Joel 2:28:32; Acts 2:15-18).

That this change occurred at Pentecost is borne out by the fact that in the New Testament, there is not a single example of someone seeking out a "prophet" to hear from God. Neither is there a single example of Paul, or any New Testament

writer, instructing their readers to seek out the “prophets” in their midst to hear from God. The time has obviously arrived for the words of Jeremiah to be fulfilled. He wrote,

“No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34).

With the coming of the Messiah, His redemptive work and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, a new era dawned. The ministry of the prophet was not discontinued but was expanded to include the entire believing community. This is what the late, Dr. Roger Stronstad, called “the prophethood of all believers.” In discussing Luke’s description of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Stronstad says:

“Here in Luke’s narrative, for the first time ever in the redemptive history of God’s people, those people truly function as a nation of prophets—the prophethood of all believers” (Hyatt, “Prophets and Prophecy,” 106).

A Nation of Prophets

Some will surely ask, “But what about certain individuals like Agabus and Silas who are referred to as ‘prophets’ in the book of Acts?” First of all, note that they are never called “Prophet Agabus” or “Prophet Silas.” The word is never used as a title to designate office but is always used to designate function.

We should also note that when Agabus prophesied of the danger awaiting Paul in Jerusalem, he ignored the prophecy and proceeded on to Jerusalem (Acts 21:9-15). The key to Paul’s decision to ignore both the prophecy and the pleadings of those present that he not go to Jerusalem, is found in Acts 19:21 where he earlier had “purposed in the Spirit” to go to Jerusalem. He trusted his own internal sense of the Spirit’s

guidance over the opinions and prophecies of others. He was living out the New Covenant reality.

Dr. Gordon Fee is surely correct when he says that those who are referred to as “prophets” in the New Testament are merely those who prophesy more than other members of the prophetic community. For example, it is obvious that in Paul’s use of the noun “prophet” in 1 Corinthians 14:29-32, he is using functional language meaning “the one who has a prophecy.” Although some think he is referring to a special group of “prophets,” it is obvious that the whole community—a nation of prophets—is being addressed.

This is confirmed by the fact that the letter is addressed to the entire church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:1-2). No leader, apostle or prophet is singled out. Not only is it addressed to the entire church, but inclusive language is used throughout, such as in 14:32, where he says, “For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” Fee comments on this passage, saying:

“This does not mean, of course, that all will or do prophesy. It is simply to note that Paul’s concern here is not with a group of prophets, but with the functioning of prophecy in the assembly. The noun ‘prophets,’ therefore, is to be understood as functional language similar to the use of interpreter in v. 28” (Hyatt, “Prophets and Prophecy,” 109).

In this post-Pentecost setting, Paul assumes that they all have the Spirit of God. Therefore, they “all” may prophesy and “all” have a responsibility to judge and evaluate what is prophesied (1 Cor. 14:29). Paul’s emphasis is on everyone living in the Spirit, adhering to the Scriptures, loving one another, listening to one another and keeping Christ central.

A Truth Whose Time Has Come

- ✖ For Pastor Morris to have taken on a “prophet” to hear from God for him and his congregation, would have been

reverting to an Old Testament pattern that is over and done with. In the same way that we do not need a special priest to go to God on our behalf, we do not need a special prophet to act as God's mouthpiece for us.

Martin Luther restored to the church the truth of the "priesthood of all believers." Perhaps it is time for a restoration of the truth of the "prophethood of all believers."

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Dr. Eddie Hyatt *is an author, historian, and Bible teacher with a vision for another Great Awakening in America. His book, "1726: The Year that Defined America," lays out the basis for expecting such an Awakening. The above article was derived from his book, "Prophets and Prophecy," available from Amazon and his website at .*