

7 Characteristics of Authentic Prophetic Ministry

Nothing less than a Third Great Awakening will rescue the bride from the quagmire of apostasy in which we have found ourselves sinking. It is therefore imperative that authentic church leaders emerge to awaken the body and spearhead rescue efforts. Much has been written regarding the restoration of modern day prophets and apostles and their leadership role in the church, yet some crucial responsibilities of these offices have either been overlooked or ignored.

For example, many prophets have succumbed to the body's insatiable lust for personal prophecy and prosperity-speaking only what our itching ears long to hear instead of what our depraved hearts need to hear. Consequently, the household of God at large is on shaky ground, having huge cracks and cavities in its foundation. Devoid of righteousness and justice, many have been bewitched into adopting a gospel of boundless grace and have unwittingly plunged into the depths of hedonism and narcissism—all in the name of a loving and merciful God (Ps. 11:3; 89:14).

It is therefore crucial in this hour that the church embrace authentic prophetic and apostolic ministers whose respective roles encompass restoring righteousness and justice to our foundation. While many today are focusing on the restoration of apostles, it is important that we take a step back and reexamine the comprehensive role of the prophet. Although there are differences regarding some aspects of Old and New Testament prophetic ministry, there are elemental truths that can be resurrected from the Biblical account of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple under Zerubbabel (Eph. 2:19-22).

During Israel's captivity, Zerubbabel and a remnant of Israelites were commissioned by Persian King Cyrus to rebuild

the temple in Jerusalem. After two years of rebuilding efforts, the Israelites ceased working on the temple for a period of 14 years due to Samaritan opposition. At this juncture the Lord sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to confront the Israelites. The result was their wholehearted re-engagement in rebuilding the temple, which they completed in only four years. What did these two prophets say or do to turn about this complacent remnant? Will the Lord commission His prophets today to awaken a sleeping church, and catalyze the body to rebuild our crumbling foundations? Let's pray so (Ezra 5:1-2).

The following seven characteristics of authentic prophetic ministry can be gleaned from this account.

1. **A Call to Repentance** – In his address to the Israelite remnant, Haggai challenged them to consider their ways, specifically their complacency regarding the Lord's house and their zeal regarding their own houses and possessions. Sound familiar? Similarly, Zechariah confronted their apostasy, encouraging them to repent and return to the Lord. Without a doubt, this type of bold confrontation of sin must first be heralded from our pulpits before we will ever witness the depth of profound repentance necessary to turn the church around and the world upside down (Hag. 1:2-9, Zech. 1:3-4).
2. **The Voice of the Lord** – Haggai's account indicates that the entire remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet. In an age when so many claimed to speak in behalf of God, Haggai made a distinction between the Lord's words and his own words. Today, the church is facing the same dilemma. Not all who say, "Thus saith the Lord," speak for the Master. Some prophesy as a means to gain popularity and prosperity or to promote their pet doctrine. Therefore, it is crucial that the eyes, ears and heart of the body are conditioned to distinguish

between the voice of the Master and that of a charlatan (Hag. 1:12).

3. **The Fear of the Lord** – Authentic prophetic ministry is also accompanied by the spirit of the fear of the Lord, producing genuine repentance and radical obedience. Haggai's and Zechariah's ministries yielded this kind of fruit, and so must prophetic ministries today. Like Jesus, prophets who delight themselves in the fear of the Lord partake of that same spirit by dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. Without the spirit of the fear of the Lord, preaching repentance has about the same effect as brow beating.
4. **Stirs Up the Remnant** – Haggai's preaching "stirred up the spirit" of the entire remnant, inspiring them to resume rebuilding the house of the Lord. Authentic prophetic ministry should "cut to the heart," provoking a passionate response to the Word of the Lord. Unfortunately, over the past 40 years the majority of American Christians have turned a deaf ear to the Lord's command to humble ourselves, pray, seek His face and turn from our wicked ways. Consequently, we have found ourselves in a spiritual wilderness and our land is in need of much healing (Hag. 1:14; 2 Chron. 7:14).
5. **Prosperes the Remnant** – The book of Ezra records, "the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel." Although much of modern Christendom associates prosperity with wealth, the Old Testament word for prosperity means "to break out mightily" or "push forward." Authentic prophetic ministry enables us to boldly break out of the bondages and eliminate the excuses that keep us from pushing forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Ezra 6:14; 2 Chron. 20:20).
6. **Ever-Increasing Glory** – Those among the remnant who were

old enough to remember Jerusalem's former temple wept over the new temple because it was most inferior. Nevertheless, Haggai prophesied that the glory of the latter temple would be greater than the former. Similarly, in these last days, while cathedrals remain dormant, our chapels and tents will be filled with hungry people seeking and finding the glory of God (Hag. 2:6-9).

7. **The Burden of the Lord** – Two of the three biblical references of the phrase “the burden of the Word of the Lord” are found in Zechariah. Much of prophetic ministry today is associated with man's private agenda instead of God's purposes—a product of what is on men's hearts instead of what is on God's heart. Conversely, authentic prophetic ministry begins with a burden from the Lord that finds expression through soul travail and a burning word from heaven that cannot be contained. That burden only comes by dwelling in the secret place with the Most High (Zech. 9:1, 12:1; Jer. 20:9).

Father, restore authentic prophetic ministry to Your church, that we might be awakened from our slumber, shaken out of our complacency and inspired to radically carry out Your purposes in the earth. Commission Your prophets, that they might carry Your burden, preach repentance and restore righteousness to Your church's foundation, in Jesus' name, amen.

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