

Are There Too Many 'Prophets' Operating by Occultic Powers?

"We are gathering a company of prophets in different local cities and regions, so that we can prophesy into the atmosphere to cause a shift in the region," said one prophet. This belief system and mode of operation is common in the "prophetic" ministry today.

Honestly, my spirit is disturbed when I hear such statements. To be clear, I am a strong proponent of the Ephesians 4:11 ministry gifts and the supernatural manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. By no means have these ministries or gifts been done away with. And I have no doubt that some of these so-called prophets and prophetesses are sincere and well-meaning, but please realize that you can be sincere and wrong at the same time and cause much damage to the body of Christ.

You just won't find that line of thinking, terminology or practice in the New Testament. "Prophecy" into the atmosphere, causing a "shift" in regions and "warring" in the heavenlies are mystical terms that produce hype in the hearers and nothing in the earth realm. There are no examples of it in the Bible. There is no Scripture for it. New Testament prophets don't prophesy into the atmosphere. Neither do Old Testament prophets for that matter.

First of all, you don't prophesy according to your own will and desire, which seems to be a very common practice today. Prophecy along with the other gifts of the Spirit manifest as the Spirit wills, not as man wills (1 Cor. 12:11). There is much error I am seeing in this area today. It has its roots in mysticism, witchcraft and occultic spirits that prophets are yielding to in this hour. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear.

I've watched some of these prophets. They yield to the Holy Spirit and the true anointing one time, and then the next time they are yielding to another spirit. And sadly, most of them don't even know the difference. They do this primarily because they feel they have to perform, but their performance is in the flesh, it brings attention to man, and it actually accommodates devils. Familiar spirits know things about people, and they can communicate that to anyone who opens themselves up to that realm. They do it in the occult all the time. Prophets are prone to this. and yet we don't want to discredit the genuine ministry of true prophets. Just be sure to test the spirits, evaluate everything with Scripture and be careful with whom you associate.

Performance and Titles

Performance in ministry is common today because titles are common. When someone has any title such as "prophet" before their name, which is very prevalent today, it automatically puts them into a performance mode. As they are addressed and introduced by their title when they minister, they then automatically feel pressure to live up to that title, so it becomes easy for them to move into a performance mode. This is becoming increasingly popular and status quo today, and I'm afraid it is setting the wrong example and damaging the body of Christ in so many ways unbeknownst to most of us.

People of the world insist on their rights and fight for their entitlements. Ministers insist on their titles and fight for their ranks. Why are we imitating the world? Because many of these title-bearing, rank-minded ministers want to be seen of men and recognized as great. Plain and simple. You can make excuses and defend yourself, but God knows your heart, and so does the devil. Title-flashing ministers are giving place to the devil and to fleshly temptations that they otherwise don't need. Remember, that kind of pride always comes before a fall.

Paul communicated his function, not his rank. "Paul, an

apostle of Jesus Christ," not "Apostle Paul". It's by "their fruit" (Matt. 7:20), not by "their titles," that we know them. It's a "man's gift" not his "title" that makes room for him (Prov. 18:16).

The primary ministry of a New Testament prophet is to preach and teach the Word of God by divine inspiration and then move in the Spirit and power as the Spirit wills. All ministers, especially prophets, should build their ministries on the sure Word of God—not on their titles, spiritual gifts or the anointing they may possess. Preaching and teaching is the primary ministry of all prophets, not prophecy and prophesying. Enough said.

Old Testament Versus New Testament Prophets

Another common error I am seeing today is the constant emphasis on using the Old Testament pattern, mentality and culture to equip the body of Christ and to train New Testament prophets. You see, the prophet was the only ministry gift in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament there are five main ministry gifts (Eph. 4:11). By conducting prophetic schools of all kinds and having prophetic networks, we give prominence to the ministry of the prophet at the expense and exclusion of other equally important ministry gifts. The Pentecostal/charismatic culture also does that with apostles.

The overemphasis of these two ministries is diminishing the importance of the local church and the vital role of shepherds and elders. Many prophets are being sidetracked today by Old Testament patterns, culture and mentality. All the ministry gifts need the same ministerial training. Although there are different categories and classes of prophets just as there are apostles, New Testament prophets should primarily be given to forth-telling, not foretelling and prophesying the future. That's another error I am seeing in Pentecostal/charismatic circles today. We all witnessed the damage that was done in the recent election via this practice of foretelling.

The fact is that New Testament prophets don't guide and direct believers. Every believer can be and should be led and guided by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14,16). Now sometimes prophets can confirm what is already in the heart of a believer, but too often that is not the culture prophets are creating or the message they are communicating today in many circles.

Now I'm not saying that New Testament prophets cannot prophesy the future via the revelatory gift of the word of wisdom, but that has to be done as the Spirit wills and not as they will. I cannot find Scripture for prophets going into cities and regions and declaring and decreeing things according to their own will and desire in an effort to change the atmosphere and cause some "shift" in the heavenlies. The greatest revivalists in American history never did that, and yet cities and entire regions were changed as crime decreased and bars and taverns were shut down and multitudes of sinners were saved. That is how you change cities and regions. It happened through soul travail and intercessory prayer, not through shouting decrees and yelling at evil spirits in the atmosphere.

New Testament prophets are primarily anointed preachers and teachers of the Word of God, and they are more given to forth-telling than foretelling. Although Agabus foretold of a drought that was coming in order to prepare believers (Acts 11:28-30), there were other prophets who mainly proclaimed the Word with inspired utterance.

"Now Judas and Silas, being prophets themselves, exhorted the brothers with many words and strengthened them" (Acts 15:32).

We need to understand that there are different classes of prophets as well as all ministry gifts, but none are to minister the same way as the Old Testament prophets did, and none are to feel pressured to perform or make something happen in the flesh. This is giving place to evil and manipulative spirits of witchcraft and the occult.

It is a huge problem in Pentecostal/charismatic circles today and creating a culture of sensationalism and hype void of the true moving of the Spirit of God who alone can bring real change. {eoa}

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 turning away from the truth we are seeing in this hour. Bert's current passion is to promote a culture of the supernatural manifestations and ministries of the Holy Spirit in the church today and to pass it on to the next generation (*Passing On The Move Of God To The Next Generation*). Other materials/resources are available on his website, *Holy Fire Ministries*. You can also follow him personally on YouTube (*Holy Fire Ministries*), Facebook or Twitter.

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