

## ***The Prophetic Gift***

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Lesson #2 for January 10, 2009

Scriptures: Genesis 20:7; Exodus 15:20; Deuteronomy 18:15; Matthew 11:11; John 6:14; Hebrews 11:24-26.

1. This lesson focuses on the kind of people that God chose to be prophets. Most were men, but some were women. With the exception of Jesus, all of them had faults. Jesus was referred to as a prophet on more than one occasion. (Deuteronomy 18:15; Matthew 13:57) They had some impact on God's people not only in Old Testament times but also in New Testament times. (Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10) We wish that they would have had more!
2. How does one qualify to be a prophet? While Abraham was the first person to be mentioned by name as a prophet, (Genesis 20:7) Moses was the first person to really function as a prophet as recorded in Scripture.
3. The primary function of a prophet was not the foretelling of the future but speaking on God's behalf to God's people.
4. Does someone have to be a perfect saint to be a prophet? Think about Gideon, Balaam, and Samson! God chooses the person that He knows will do the best job for Him at any given time. Almost every prophet mentioned in the Bible had mistakes or weaknesses mentioned about him or her. Did female prophets perform a different role than male prophets? Did the prophets of the Old Testament perform a different role than the apostles and prophets of the New Testament?
5. While Abraham was referred to as a prophet on one occasion, (Genesis 20:7) in the Pentateuch Moses was repeatedly referred to as a prophet. The prophets of the Old Testament functioned not only as "seers"—people who saw God in visions and dreams—but also as "prophets"—people who spoke on God's behalf to others. Some of the prophets functioned also as "intercessors." That was particularly true of Moses as we will see later.
6. Some of the prophets were very close "friends" of God. (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23) Others are described as speaking "face-to-face" with God. (Numbers 12; Deuteronomy 34) What do those terms mean? What do those terms imply?
7. How much do we know about the role of prophets in the New Testament? (Acts 11:19-27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10) Notice that Saul (Paul) was also called a prophet. Some of the believers who first went to Antioch in Syria performed a marvelous task for the Christian church. Those were the people—even though they are not named—who were the first ones to directly preach the gospel to Gentiles! They were the first ones to directly follow the example of Jesus in speaking directly to Gentiles about the gospel. (Mark 5:1-20) That may have been one of the greatest breakthroughs in the history of the Christian Church. Why do we know so little about them? They were followed by "prophets" and "apostles." The future of the Christian Church depended on that.
8. How much do we know about the character and personality of Moses? He was the first

prophet to function in various roles as described in Scripture. He was humble (Exodus 4:10); meek (Numbers 12:3); slow to speak (Exodus 4:10); bold in speaking directly to God (Exodus 32:11-32); occasionally impatient (Numbers 20:10-12); but absolutely committed to God's reputation and to His people (Hebrews 11:24-26). What training did Moses have for his job? Which preparation was more important? Was it his 40 years growing up in Egypt and being instructed how to be the next Pharaoh of Egypt? Or was it his 40 years watching sheep in the Midianite wilderness? Moses probably needed both! Moses was just beginning his career at age 80!

9. Who was the first "intercessor" mentioned in the Bible? (Exodus 20:18-21) On two different occasions, Moses pleaded with God not to destroy God's people. (Exodus 32:11-13; Numbers 14:13-39) How often in your prayers have you prayed that God would be more forgiving or even patient? These experiences must have occurred for the benefit of the angels in heaven because God knew that He was about to bring Moses up there to live among them! They are recorded for our benefit. On another occasion Moses instructed Aaron to rush into the crowds with his censer to prevent the children of Israel from being killed by a plague. (Number 16:46-50)
10. Does the intercession of Moses on behalf of God's people teach us anything about the prophetic role? (Exodus 30:11-13; Numbers 14:13-19; 16:46-50) Moses was asking God to keep on doing what He has always done.
11. How many of the prophets of the Old Testament seemed to function as "intercessors" between God and man? Clearly, Moses and Daniel "stood up" for God's reputation. (Exodus 20:18-20; Deuteronomy 5; 18:14-22; 34:10; Daniel 9:15-19) On so many occasions in the Old Testament, God must have winced and Satan must have toured the universe to say, "The whole world is following me! Just leave us alone God. There is no one down there who cares about you anyway!" So when God gets an opportunity to point out someone who is really on His side, He boasts about that person. The best thing you can do for a friend is to stand up for his reputation.  
  
Usually in the Old Testament it was the priests that served in the role of intercessor rather than the prophets.
12. After spending two long periods of time with God on the top of Mount Sinai, Moses came down with his face "shining" so brightly that the people could not look at him. (Exodus 34:28-35) That glory was a reflection of God's own glory. (2 Corinthians 3:7) Some prophets got very close to God!
13. By writing the first five books of the Bible which are sometimes known as the Torah or the Pentateuch, Moses under the guidance of the Holy Spirit set the "standard" for Scripture. All subsequent revelations from God have been measured against that standard. Numerous groups, such as the Sadducees, in later years accepted only the books of Moses and refused to accept any other works as truly inspired. Writing the Torah/Pentateuch was probably the greatest work of Moses.
14. Why hasn't God given us a "Moses" today? Don't we need that kind of leadership now? Could we have a relationship as close to God as Moses had? What will be the experience of the 144,000? How did the people of Israel know that those words from Moses were the Word of God? They heard many of them spoken by God Himself and later written down by Moses.

Then they saw Moses ascend into the cloud and spend long periods of time with “God.” When Moses came down the mountain with his face shining so bright that they could not look at him, that was enough evidence to believe that Moses was speaking on God’s behalf. Moses was the first “writing prophet,” and he set the standard for all others. What is the difference between what happened to Moses and being persuaded by the use of “miracles” which many TV evangelists are claiming today? Didn’t Jesus attract great crowds by performing miracles? But the crowds needed more than the miracles. (John 6)

Note carefully that there are two different standards by which churches judge truth today. Most protestant churches agree that any new truth that is suggested must be in harmony with all of the truth that has been revealed down through the generations. Some churches such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Mormon Church believe that they have a direct link to God, and if their current “pope” or “prophet” comes out with a new revelation, it takes preference over everything that has been written or said in the past, even in the Bible.

15. Read Deuteronomy 18:15. Who was the prophet that Moses was naming? Context seems to suggest that the immediate fulfillment referred to Joshua, his successor. But the much “larger fulfillment” refers to the “Joshua” (*Jesus* in the Greek) who came 1400 years later. What parallels can you see between the life of Moses and that of Jesus?
16. For those who are experienced with the ancient writings from different nations around the world, it has become apparent that the faults of kings or military leaders were never spelled out in their writings! But in Scripture we see that the faults of God’s prophets and God’s spiritual leaders are detailed. Moses did not want to accept God’s call. Abraham lied on multiple occasions. Nathan and Isaiah gave some messages to their kings and later had to change those messages. Jonah’s prejudice almost cost him his life. But those people are held up in Scripture as prophets from whom we are to learn lessons.
17. What kind of people has God called to be His prophets? Jeremiah and Ezekiel were of priestly families. Isaiah, Daniel, and Zephaniah belonged to the royal family. Elisha was a farmer, and Amos was a shepherd. Deborah was serving as a judge. Jonah and Huldah served as counselors to kings. A number of the prophets that we know about wrote books, but others did not. But each one carried a message from God to His people—sometimes to specific individuals and sometimes to God’s people as a whole. What do we call people who speak to others on God’s behalf? Prophets. Has God asked us to speak on His behalf? What about people like Balaam and the false prophet of 1 Kings 13? Who else was a “prophet” in the story of Balaam? His donkey! Didn’t the donkey speak on God’s behalf? Is everyone who speaks about God a prophet?
18. Why do you think Miriam was called a prophetess? Did she predict the future? How many specific things can you think of that Miriam did? (Exodus 2:1-10; 15:20,21; Numbers 12:1-16) Apparently, Miriam was one of the great leaders of the children of Israel. She carried out something like a “women’s ministry.” But she caused a delay in the progress of the children of Israel when she criticized another woman—Moses’ wife—apparently because her skin tone was darker. (Numbers 12:1-16) When Jethro arrived and brought Moses’ wife to him, did Moses begin accepting her advice over the advice of Miriam and Aaron? Josephus suggested that Miriam married Hur who helped to hold up Moses’ arms in the battle with the Amalekites. Miriam led the women in singing after the miraculous escape through the Red Sea. (Exodus 15:20,21)

19. The prophetess Deborah not only functioned as a judge respected by the people of Israel (Judges 4 and 5) but was clearly recognized as a spiritual leader and someone who represented God's will. Barak felt reluctant to go into battle without her approval—even her presence. Huldah was consulted by King Josiah at a time when the nation was just about to go into captivity. (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:20-28) It is interesting that Josiah chose to consult Huldah despite the fact that living in the country and probably in the near vicinity of Jerusalem where Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Daniel, and Ezekiel—two of whom were his relatives!
20. In the times of the New Testament, the church leaders were often referred to as *apostles*. In some respects that word has some parallel meanings with the word *prophet*. But there were also church leaders referred to as prophets in the New Testament. (Acts 11:27,28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10) Apostles and prophets working together were the ones who led to the great steps forward in the spread of the gospel in the times of the New Testament. It was unnamed prophets in the church at Antioch who first took the gigantic step of preaching the gospel directly to Gentiles. Those apostles and prophets of the New Testament not only had the messages of the entire Old Testament but also the life experience and knowledge about Jesus—His life and His death—to inspire them and give additional meaning to their message.
- If I stand up in front of others and speak the truth about God, does that make me a prophet? Will there be prophets in the church at the end of time? If we had a whole group of people who were ready to put God's reputation first and do their best to represent Him correctly, Jesus could come again.
21. Obviously, prophets have included a very diverse group of people right through the history of the Bible. Some were also called apostles. Some of them were guilty of major mistakes. Why do you think God arranged for the recording of their sins? Does it encourage you or discourage you to dwell on the sins of prophets? The sin of Moses kept him out of the kingdom, at least temporarily! (Jude 9) Do we have any prophets or apostles in our church today?
22. Sometimes, we read of prophecies being made by people in our day. Often, they prove to be incorrect. Occasionally, one will make a prediction which turns out to be remarkably accurate. Should we give credence to those prophecies? What can we learn about God by looking at the people through whom He chose to work? Based on your answer, do you think God would be willing to work through you? Is He willing to work through us? Is God looking for a new generation of prophets?

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