

## PNEUMATOLOGY (106)

Paul makes it very clear that the timing of his apostleship was very unique, making him the last of the apostles (I Cor. 15:7-9).

Now this gift of apostle was a foundational gift for the Church Age (Eph. 2:20). What this means is that the apostles laid the foundation for the entire Church Age through their instruction, both verbal and written. The apostles were enabled by God to perform apostolic signs and wonders, which became their credentials.

With the passing of the twelve and Paul, the gift ceased. Their foundation stands and the Church Age moves forward. The impact of this gift is still evidenced.

**Gift #2** - The gift of a prophet or the gift of prophecy. Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12:10; Eph. 4:11

The gift of prophecy or the gift of a prophet was a N.T. gift in which a person functioned as a prophet of God. In both the O.T. and the N.T., a prophet received direct revelation from God. G. Abbott Smith said the primary meaning of prophecy was “telling forth divine counsels.” The noun “prophet” specifically means to receive and communicate the will, the purpose and the counsel of God (p. 390). We may understand the gift of prophecy as **one who supernaturally received direct revelation from God and who communicated that revelation, which included God’s will, purpose and counsel.**

**(Question #1)** - How important was the gift of prophecy?

- 1) It was ranked by God as the number two gift after apostle (I Cor. 12:29; Eph. 4:11).
- 2) It revealed similar revelation for the Church Age like an apostle (Eph. 3:5).
- 3) It was a gift specifically listed in three key gift passages (Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:11).
- 4) It was a gift far greater than tongues (I Cor. 14:5).
- 5) It was a gift that had God-ordained guidelines (I Cor. 14:29-32).
- 6) It was a gift that had God-ordered warnings (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Jer. 29:8-9, 21-23; Matt. 7:15; I John 4:1-3).

**(Question #2)** - What type of information did the gift of prophecy reveal?

When a N.T. prophet revealed the information he received from God, his information was at best partial (I Cor. 13:9). Each bit of information that God revealed through a prophet was inspired, imperative and immediate, but each was a partial ingredient that was a significant part of the whole.

There were many types of information revealed by a N.T. prophet:

- 1) N.T. prophets were able to reveal the selection of Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for sacred ministry and service (Acts 13:1-4).
- 2) N.T. prophets were able to reveal profitable revelation to the church (I Cor. 4:6).
- 3) N.T. prophets were able to reveal instructive revelation to the church (I Cor. 14:31a).

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- 4) N.T. prophets were able to reveal exhortative revelation to the church (I Cor. 14:31b).
- 5) N.T. prophets were able to reveal Christ's universal work to the church (Eph. 2:19-20).
- 6) N.T. prophets were able to reveal Christ's international work to the church (Eph. 3:5-12).
- 7) N.T. prophets were able to reveal written revelation for the church (II Pet. 1:20-21).
- 8) N.T. prophets were able to reveal futuristic revelation to the church (Rev. 1:1, 3).

**(Question #3)** - Who had the gift of prophecy?

- 1) We know the apostles received direct revelation from God and therefore could function as a prophet (I Cor. 14:10; II Pet. 1:20-21; Rev. 1:1,3). An apostle was a higher ranked gift than a prophet, but an apostle could function as a prophet (I Cor. 12:28).
- 2) We know certain leaders of the early church were N.T. prophets (Acts 13:1).
- 3) We know that certain men in the church have the gift of prophecy (I Cor. 11:4).
- 4) We know that certain women in the church could have the gift of prophecy, specifically unmarried virgins (Acts 21:9; I Cor. 11:5, 14:34-37).

During the early days of the church, the gift of prophecy was fully operative and a variety of people were singled out by God to receive direct messages from Him so they might reveal those messages to the Church.

**(Question #4)** - What were the purposes of the gift of prophecy?

- 1) To reveal inspired revelation to God's people. I Cor. 2:10; Eph. 3:3-5  
This is revelatory information God's people would not have known otherwise (Num. 12:6; Ezek. 13:16-17).
- 2) To reveal inspired revelation to edify God's people. I Cor. 14:3a  
The word "edify" means to build up. God revealed His Word through prophets so that His people could be built up in the faith. It is clear that the gift, at times, negatively rebuked and tore down so it could positively build up (14:20-22).
- 3) To reveal inspired revelation to exhort God's people. I Cor. 14:3b  
The word "exhort" has to do with the idea of calling, entreating or appealing to someone in a way that may help them.
- 4) To reveal inspired revelation to console God's people. I Cor. 14:3c  
The word "consolation" refers to persuading in an encouraging way. God's revealed truth may reprove and rebuke, but it will also build up and comfort.

There is a remarkable story in Acts 27 in which Paul was on his way to Rome and a violent storm arose. All of the men on board thought they would die, yet Paul received a direct revelation from God that they would not (Acts 27:22-23, 34). The text says that the whole ship was encouraged (Acts 27:36). In this case, the prophetic revelation even consoled lost people.

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As we will demonstrate, the gift of prophecy is not for today, for all of God's revealed truth has been put in writing in the Bible. However, based on what the Bible says, we may assert that the United States and Russia will not end in nuclear war. This prophetic revelation may even console lost people who live in the U.S. or Russia.

- 5) To reveal that God was still giving His Word to believers. I Cor. 14:22  
Just as tongues was a sign to the unbelieving Jew that God's program had moved to people of different languages other than Hebrew (Acts 2:5-13), so prophecy was a sign to all believers that God's program reveals things to God's people. Even today, it is the believer who understands the Word of God, but the unbeliever has no capability of grasping God's revelation (I Cor. 2:14).
- 6) To give instruction to the believer. I Cor. 14:31  
Since prophecy was direct revelation from God, it was obviously given so God's people could gain God's knowledge and counsel. God's Word is **always** given to give instruction to the believer so he might "learn" what to believe and how to behave.

**(Question #5)** - How long was the gift of prophecy operative?

There is absolutely no doubt, from the clear testimony of I Corinthians 13:8, that prophecy was a temporal gift that would be "done away." God clearly says that prophetic revelations would cease. The big question is "when"? When could God's people expect prophecy to cease?

We know prophesy was a gift fully operative when Paul wrote I Thessalonians (A.D. 51-52), and I Corinthians (A.D. 56). We know prophesy was a gift fully operative when Paul wrote Romans (A.D. 57-58) and Ephesians (A.D. 60).

To answer the question of when did this gift cease, we need to examine four critical passages:

**Passage #1** - Ephesians 2:20 .

Clearly, from this text, both apostles and prophets are said to be foundational gifts for the building of the church (Eph. 2:21-22). Even at this time, much prophetic revelation was already being put in writing (Eph. 3:4). F. David Farnell, a biblical scholar who has studied this gift in great depth, accurately observes: "This foundation, by implication and by its very nature, can be laid only once since foundations are necessarily laid only once at the beginning of any structure" (F. David Farnell, *When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease*, Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 150, p. 187). We may legitimately conclude from this verse that once the Church structure began to grow and take shape, the foundational gifts like "apostle" and "prophecy" would cease.

**Passage #2** - I Corinthians 13:10 .

It is clearly stated from this verse that prophecy will be done away "when the perfect comes."

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As we have already demonstrated, we believe this is a clear connection to the completion of Scripture as the word “perfect” literally means complete, finished or mature (*G. Abbott-Smith*, p. 442).

### Passage #3 – II Peter 1:19-21.

The Apostle Peter clearly equated the more sure prophetic word with the prophetic Scriptures (1:20). In his mind, God’s written revelation was the highest form of revelation, which also coincides with the thinking of Paul (Eph. 3:4).

### Passage #4 - Revelation 22:18-19.

John warns that no prophetic revelation was to be added after the completion of the final book in the Bible—Revelation.

From these four passages we conclude that **the gift of prophecy was in the process of ceasing as the Word of God was being written. After the book of Revelation was completed, the gift was completely done away just as Paul predicted. The gift passed off the scene just as the apostles did.**

The gift of prophecy was a **foundational** gift needed to reveal God’s Word and will **prior** to His written revelation. God’s Word and God’s will are fully revealed in God’s Word. His program, His plan and His will are completely revealed and contained in the 66 books He put in writing—the Bible.

**(Question #6)** - How was the gift of prophecy viewed by the early church?

When the gift of prophecy was fully operative during the days of the early church, it was a gift that tended to be despised (I Thess. 5:20). The word “despise” means that the gift was treated with contempt and was considered as nothing.

The gift did reveal direct messages from God, but either due to the fact that people did not want direct messages or due to the fact that the gift was not flashy or showy like tongues, it was viewed as nothing. Keep in mind this was the number two ranked gift, but it was a despised gift.

Clearly setting forth the truth of God has never been a popular type of ministry. If one does flashy things, he will impress people, but one who simply communicates the revelation of God will, more than likely, be despised.

**(Question #7)** - Is a preacher or teacher of God’s Word a prophet?

This is a particularly confusing issue today. Some draw two categories of prophets—1) a revelatory prophet; 2) a proclamatory prophet. It is this teacher’s contention that there are **no** prophets today.