

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

30 What Is the Gift of Prophecy?

Most people think of the future when the word “prophecy” is mentioned. Many are familiar with the “prophecies” of Jeanne Dixon who foretold the death of John F. Kennedy four years before he was elected president as well as the death of Dag Hammarskjold by an air crash. It seems reasonable to mention that her prediction concerning the outbreak of World War III in 1958, and Richard Nixon's defeat of John Kennedy did not come true. Is this what the Bible means by the gift of prophecy?

I. BIBLE TIMES:

The English word “prophet” comes from a Greek word of two parts which mean literally to “Forth” “tell.” The basic meaning of the word prophecy is forth telling and among the many messages which are told there may be that which pertains to the future. Prophets speak for another and the Old Testament includes the writings and words of those who spoke for God from Moses to Malachi. The Old Testament prophets received their messages from God by revelation (verbal communication), dream or vision. The prophets warned, promised, rebuked and taught. He acted consciously and often used an object to emphasize the message. The first mention of prophets in the New Testament occurs in Acts 11:27-28. The church at Antioch in Syria had “*certain prophets and teachers.*” (Acts 13:1) Other New Testament references are Acts 15:32; Acts 21:9; I Corinthians 14:3,4; Ephesians 2:20; I Thessalonians 5:20) In the early church, before the apostolic message was inscripturated, special understanding pertaining coming events was given to people with the prophetic gift. Does this happen today?

II. SPEAKING FORTH FOR GOD:

In both Testaments prophecy generally is a fearless proclamation of the word of God expounded in the light of the contemporary situation. Prophecy is the Spirit given ability to proclaim the Word of God with clarity and to apply it to a particular situation with the view toward edification. It seems to rank high among the gifts (I Corinthians 12:28) and in the list of ministries (Ephesians 4:11), and one would therefore expect it to be prevalent today, making the word of God intelligible is necessary. Donald Grey Barnhouse widens the scope of the

gift with the statement, "I do not agree with commentators who apply this test only to the giants or church history. God does not mean primarily Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and so on. He is talking about the little preacher up the north fork of Peak Creek; He is talking about those whom we call "laymen," although they form the vast majority of the body of Christ." (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Booklet No.69)

III. THE GIFT OF FAITH:

Those who have the gift are to exercise it "*according to the portion of faith.*" (Romans 12:6) Some understand this to mean a new elucidation or amplification of truth contained in the Scripture. Others believe this statement to mean speaking forth the truth in the measure you have laid hold of the truth, or to the degree it has laid hold of you. A third interpretation is to equate the faith with the gift, exhorting people to prophecy according to the measure of the gift. I think all express some truth. The prophet's concern is the application of God's Word to God's people, and to those God wants to speak to outside of His love

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