

# The Prophets of God

“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.”

Psalm 68:18

## Introduction:

1. We use the term “prophet” here loosely as a messenger of the Lord, for the specific office of prophet has been abolished with the arrival of the more sure word of prophecy (I Cor 13:8-12; II Peter 1:19-21).
  2. With an ordination approaching, it is important we understand the nature and blessing of God’s prophets; for we need to consider it, pray for it, and celebrate because of it accordingly.
  3. Those truly saved by the power of Jesus Christ, enlightened by His Spirit, and remembering the good word of God they have been taught know the importance and blessing of the approaching ordination.
  4. The Lord gave the word, great was the company of the preachers that published it (Psalm 68:11).
  5. How beautiful are feet of those who preach the gospel and bring glad tidings of good things (Ro 10:15).
  6. These are the stewards of God’s mysteries, which I have preached to you in recent weeks (I Cor 4:1).
  7. Our Lord Jesus has taken a far journey, but He gave authority and assignments to men (Mark 13:34).
  8. If it were not for these faithful men of God, we would hardly know anything; we could easily be Mormons, Catholics, Campbellites, Lutherans, Charismatics, etc., etc. Was it luck or chance we have heard the truth? Or was it the sovereignty of God and the faithfulness of gifted men?
  9. Forget all you have seen, heard, or thought about ministers, and open your mind to Scripture (Is 55:8-9; Rom 3:4; II Cor 10:3-6); for as converted Catholics and other heretics must expunge numerous false impressions and doctrines, so do all sincere saints. There is no understanding outside Holy Scripture.
  10. Don’t say this study can’t profit you! How do you pray for your pastor? How do you measure pastors? What are your responsibilities toward a pastor? How can you desire the character of a pastor as a man?
  11. We shall use generalizations in this study, but exceptions do not nullify a rule but rather establish it.
  12. I hope that the ordination in two weeks will not be my last, so I preach also to any other gifts present.
  13. We know the certain interpretation and application of our text from Paul’s use of it (Ephesians 4:8-11).
  14. For a more detailed review of God’s ministers, see the full outline “The Ministry” from August, 1986.
- I. The **PERSONS**: Prophets of God are not educated, refined, gentle, or popular society men.
- A. The Lord chose the foolish things to confound the things that are wise (I Cor 1:27-29), for it was His apostles and disciples that provoked His thankful prayer (Luke 10:17-24).
  - B. Intelligence, education, graciousness, and refinement are not common traits at all.
  - C. At least four of the twelve apostles were fishermen (Mat 4:18-22; John 21:1-3), one was a tax collector (Matt 9:9), and so forth. Jesus did not ordain from the ministerial class.
  - D. Doctors, lawyers, theologians, priests, politicians, orators, and wise men were rejected.
  - E. Peter and John (and thus their brothers) were uneducated and ignorant men (Acts 4:13).
  - F. God’s qualifications do not match the world’s criteria: rather than high grades in three dead languages, He requires a strong disciplinarian at home (I Tim 3:1-7; Titus 2:5-9).
  - G. David was an obscure shepherd boy (Psalm 78:70-72; I Sam 16:11; 17:15; II Sam 7:8).
  - H. Amos was not a prophet or prophet’s son, but God called him (Amos 1:1; 7:14-15).
  - I. Moses spent forty years keeping the flocks of his father in law Jethro (Ex 2:16-22; 3:1).
  - J. Since Jesus Christ calls the rebellious (Ps 68:18), we cannot ignore Moses (Ex 4:10-17), Jonah (Jonah 1:1-3), Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-9), and Paul (I Cor 9:16-18; Acts 9:5).
- II. The **CHARACTER**: Prophets of God are bold, dogmatic, and faithful to proclaim God’s word.
- A. Though he fled Egypt once, an ordained Moses defied Pharaoh (Exodus 5:1 – 14:31).
  - B. God sent Jethro to advise Moses what kind of men to choose as elders (Ex 18:21-22).
  - C. Elijah challenged heresy, mocked 950 prophets, called fire down from heaven, stirred a public revival, and slew the prophets in a glorious confrontation (I Kings 18:17-40).
  - D. Elisha asked for twice the spirit of Elijah to his face at his departure (II Kings 2:12).

- E. God made the forehead of Ezekiel hard against the rebellious foreheads of Israel, and He told him not to fear them regardless of their response to his preaching (Ezek 3:4-11).
  - F. Daniel knew the fearful word he had for Nebuchadnezzar, but he told it (Dan 4:19,27).
  - G. Paul instructed Timothy and all bishops to be instant – insistent, urging, pressing – both in season [receptive hearers] and out of season [resisting hearers] (II Timothy 4:2).
  - H. And he charged Titus to shut mouths, stop Jews, and rebuke the Creteans (Titus 1:9-14).
  - I. What makes one man differ from another in love and use of God’s Word (I Cor 4:7).
- III. The **INTEGRITY**: Prophets of God care not what men think or offer to compromise His word.
- A. Micaiah would not compromise in the face of 400 competing prophets (I Kings 22:14).
  - B. Paul, as a New Testament minister, cared little for public opinion of men (I Cor 4:2-4).
  - C. Preaching the word out of season is to preach in spite of hearers’ resistance (II Tim 4:2).
- IV. The **MANNER**: Prophets of God have manners and methods contrary to refined pulpit manner.
- A. All the refined, educated, and effeminate of society who love political correctness will despise the prophets of God, who value their sober message far more than popularity.
  - B. Some of these examples of pulpit manner are used to ridicule and discredit Scripture.
  - C. They do not wear special clothing to separate themselves as the clergy (Matt 23:5-7).
  - K. Elijah was well known for his hairy appearance and leather girdle (II Kings 1:8), and other prophets followed this example, both sincere and false (Isaiah 20:2; Zech 13:4).
  - L. John the Baptist had long hair, ate locusts and wild honey, wore camel’s hair with a leather girdle, and was considered insane by popular opinion (Matthew 3:4; 11:7-19).
  - D. Isaiah went naked for three years to condemn trust in Ethiopia and Egypt (Is 20:1-6).
  - E. Jeremiah described unfaithful Judah as an unfaithful and whorish woman (Jer 3:1-10).
  - F. Jeremiah took a girdle, buried it, and then wore it dirty to condemn Judah (Jer 13:1-11).
  - G. God had Ezekiel bake biscuits over human, then cow, dung to illustrate (Ezek 4:1-17).
  - H. Ezekiel was to shave his head and beard and then do variously with the hair (Eze 5:1-4).
  - I. Ezekiel graphically describes sluts to aggravate Judah’s sins (Ezek 16:15-59; 23:1-49).
  - J. God had Hosea marry a prostitute and produce three children for a sermon (Hos 1:2-9).
  - K. Then Hosea bought an adulteress of a loving husband and took her forever (Hos 3:1-3).
  - L. Jesus Himself used parables, blasted the Pharisees, made a whip of cords, provoked His enemies, and left blind leaders to take both into a ditch.
- V. The **PURPOSE**: Prophets of God reveal the will of God and perfect the saints who hear them.
- A. Consider how Ezra and the other priests caused the people to understand (Neh 8:8).
  - B. God’s people are fed with knowledge and understanding by His pastors (Jer 3:15).
  - C. The people are to seek the law and will of God from His prophets’ mouths (Mal 2:6-7).
  - D. If it had not been for Philip, the eunuch would not understand Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:26-35).
  - E. Paul states the purpose for the New Testament clearly to the Ephesians (Eph 4:8-16).
- VI. The **MESSAGE**: Prophets of God reveal His will by vision, dream, inspiration, or Scripture.
- A. Prophets under the Old Testament received His word by vision and dreams (Num 12:6).
  - B. Moses was greater than a prophet, in that God spoke to him face to face (Num 12:6).
  - C. God’s prophets are messengers of the Lord of hosts by bringing His word (Mal 2:5-7).
  - D. Ezekiel was told to preach, “Thus saith the Lord,” in spite of the response (Ezek 2:1-5).
  - E. Paul praised the Thessalonians for receiving his words as God’s words (I Thess 2:13).
  - F. The job description of a New Testament bishop is simple: preach the word (II Tim 4:2).

- VII. The **MANUAL**: Prophets of God understand the Holy Scriptures are their infallible manual.
- A. All ministers are less than apostles, who wrote God's commandments (I Cor 14:36-38).
  - B. All Scripture is given by inspiration – for the man of God to be perfect (II Tim 3:16-17).
  - C. Ministers like Timothy study and read to shew themselves approved (II Timothy 2:15).
  - D. Ministers must give themselves wholly to reading and its application (I Tim 4:13-16).
  - E. God has chosen men to be His messengers, and they should know His law (Mal 2:7).
- VIII. The **TREASURE**: Prophets of God are stewards of His grand mysteries hidden from the world.
- A. Paul told the Corinthians to consider him as a steward of God's mysteries (I Cor 4:1).
  - B. Paul told the Corinthians he had his ministerial treasure in a earthen vessel (II Cor 4:7).
  - C. A good minister brings forth both old and new things from his treasury (Matt 13:52).
  - D. John the Baptist was the greatest prophet yet knew little of the kingdom (Matt 11:11).
- IX. The **PROFIT**: Prophets of God save you to right doctrine, practice, assurance, and deliverance.
- A. The Lord Jesus Christ gave bishops for deliverance from false doctrine (Eph 4:14).
  - B. The lies of devils in the church of Rome are destroyed by God's prophets (I Tim 4:1-7).
- X. The **CALL**: Prophets of God do not choose the office but are chosen and put in it by God.
- A. God's offices are not chosen like other professions are chosen (Heb 5:4; I Tim 3:1-2).
  - B. Christ's offices are not by selection, but rather by appointment (Tit 1:5-9; I Tim 3:1-2).
  - C. It is a shame that boys today are taught and allowed to choose ministry like accounting.
  - D. The subject "call to the ministry" felt within the candidate has become an indispensable prerequisite in most circles, though they cannot define it clearly and it does not have even a modicum of Bible support. The more sure word is better than God's voice.
  - E. The call to the ministry is observable ability rather than internal urgings, for desire does not make a call – qualifications check desire (I Tim 3:1-2), all are to desire it (I Cor 12:31), Moses did not (Ex 4:1-17), and ability is to be sought (II Tim 2:2; Tit 1:5-9).
  - F. Consider Bezaleel's call – God-given ability observable by Moses (Ex 31:1-5; 36:1-3).
- XI. The **PREPARATION**: Prophets of God are prepared by God and proven by other prophets.
- A. See how God gave Saul a new heart, and he was a prophet (I Samuel 10:6-13,22; 11:6).
  - B. God's prophets are to be very cautious and careful in ordaining others (I Timothy 5:23).
- XII. The **ORDINATION**: Prophets of God are recognized and appointed by ministerial ordination.
- A. Moses ordained Joshua to replace himself by a formal appointment (Num 27:12-23).
  - B. Ananias ordained Paul; Paul ordained others; they ordain others (Acts 22:12-16; 14:23).
  - C. Paul left Titus in Crete to ordain elders in the cities of the island for the gospel (Tit 1:5).
  - D. We hold ministerial succession by faith in God's ordinance and providence (II Tim 2:2).
  - E. If you consider your children God's gift, how do you despise His ordained prophets?
- XIII. The **WORK**: Prophets of God have a good work with labor, stress, trouble, and persecution.
- A. Though it is called a good work, it is still a work, not retirement on the job (I Tim 3:1).
  - B. Paul warned Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (II Tim 2:3).
- XIV. The **ROLE**: Prophets of God are servants and not lords and rule by example rather than force.
- A. The secret to being the greatest is to be the lowest and best servant (Matthew 23:11-12).
  - B. Saints and churches are the Lord's, and ministers are to be good examples (I Pet 5:2-3).

- XV. The **POPULARITY**: Prophets of God are not popular, for they preach a hard message boldly.
- A. Elijah telling Ahaziah that he would die for seeking false gods is hard (II Kings 1:1-18).
  - B. Jesus was a Prophet, and his unpopular message caused most to leave (John 6:41-66).
  - C. Paul said apostles were filth of the world and offscouring of all things (I Cor 4:9-13).
- XVI. The **ESTEEM**: Prophets of God are to be esteemed for their call, work, profit, and Master.
- A. Though we reject flattering titles, we esteem God's prophets for their office and work.
  - B. Paul ordered saints to esteem them very highly in love for their work (I Thess 5:12-13).
  - C. They do not promote or accept flattering titles (Job 32:21-22; Matt 23:8-10; II Pet 3:15).
- XVII. The **CHECK**: Prophets of God are checked by the Word of God and accepted or rejected by it.
- A. A prophet's message is checked by Scripture, even if he does miracles (Deut 13:1-5).
  - B. The Bereans were noble because they searched the Scriptures to check Paul (Ac 17:11).
  - C. The spirit of a prophet is to be checked by the apostles' doctrine (I John 4:1-6).
  - D. Prophets speaking contrary to God's word are worthy of the death penalty (Deut 18:20).
  - E. Ministers are to be judged by their fruit regardless of their appearance (Matt 7:15-20).
  - F. The Lord prophesies tender parents killing children who are false prophets (Zech 13:3).
- XVIII. The **PUNISHMENT**: Prophets of God have a Judge Who exposes errors and punishes sins.
- A. Building on Christ's foundation with carnal materials brings judgment (I Cor 3:12-17).
  - B. Christ's ministers are judged by the Lord rather than merely by the church (I Cor 4:1-5).
  - C. Balaam desired to compromise for money, but God sent a dumb ass (II Peter 2:15-16).
  - D. The Lord will expose false ministries and doctrine as fruitless and vain (II Tim 3:8-9).
  - E. God made Israel's priests contemptible for being partial in the law (Malachi 2:1-3,8-9).
- XIX. The **WARFARE**: Prophets of God are in spiritual war against the thoughts of their hearers.
- A. A prophet's spiritual warfare is against your imaginations and thoughts (II Cor 10:3-6).
  - B. God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours, and prophets reveal them (Isaiah 55:8-9).
  - C. God uses prophets to hew - cut or chop into pieces - His rebellious people (Hosea 6:5).
  - D. God prepares prophets, teaches them His Word, and stirs up their spirits (Titus 1:10-14).
- XX. The **RESPONSIBILITY**: Prophets of God are bound to warn their hearers of God's judgment.
- A. God told Ezekiel He would require his blood, if he failed to warn Israel (Ezek 3:16-21).
  - B. Paul labored diligently to free himself from the blood of all men in Asia (Acts 20:26).
  - C. Timothy was responsible to take heed to the doctrine to save his hearers (I Tim 4:16).
- XXI. The **REWARD**: Prophets of God give account of hearers to bring God's blessing or judgment.
- A. Korah and others provoked Moses to the detriment of life and family (Num 16:4-30).
  - B. Receiving and treating a prophet with esteem brings a prophet's reward (Matt 10:41).
  - C. Paul was thankful and sought precious blessings upon Onesiphorus (II Tim 1:15-18).
  - D. Paul warned Hebrew saints of the consequences of ministerial accounting (Heb 13:17).
- XXII. The **PROTECTION**: Prophets of God are His property and protected by His glorious power.
- A. He told kings, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm" (Ps 105:13-15).
  - B. Abraham was a prophet, and God protected him from two kings (Genesis 12:17; 20:7).
  - C. He warned Abimelech about Rebekah enough to suggest the death penalty (Gen 26:11).
  - D. When Korah and others attacked Moses, God intervened powerfully (Num 16:4-30).
  - E. Elijah took out two companies of fifty with their captains by God's fire (II Kgs 1:1-18).
  - F. A few children learned proper respect of a prophet from two she bears (II Kgs 2:23-25).

- G. In the New Testament, the Lord opened jails several times (Acts 5:19; 12:6; 16:25).
- H. The king who killed James and tried to kill Peter was eaten of worms (Acts 12:23).
- I. God's protection of Paul from Jerusalem to Rome is a story itself (Acts 21:27 – 28:31).
- J. When Paul stood before Caesar, the Lord was there and delivered him (II Tim 4:16-18).
- K. Accusations against an elder are rejected without two or three witnesses (I Tim 5:23).

XXIII. The **DANGER**: Prophets of God must be obeyed with great fear of dire consequences.

- A. God sent Ezekiel to Judah before He destroyed them with Nebuchadnezzar (Eze 2:1-5).
- B. God's warnings are to be taken seriously by both prophet and hearers (Ezekiel 3:16-21).
- C. Sitting as the Lord's people and obeying His word are different things (Ezek 33:27-33).
- D. Jesus promised worse judgment than Sodom's for rejecting His teachers (Lu 10:10-12).
- E. To reject God's prophets with His commandments is to be ignorant (I Cor 14:37-38).
- F. God's choice of words is soul death for those who err from His truth (James 5:20).

XXIV. The **PAY**: Prophets of God are supported by their hearers in an exchange that is right and fair.

- A. Prophets give you spiritual things, and you give them every good thing (Galatians 6:6).
- B. They do not work for the pay, but receive the pay as necessary to the work (I Peter 5:2).
- C. Most prophets of God could make more for less work in other pursuits (Heb 11:24-26), as the nature of their qualifications presuppose above average abilities and leadership.
- D. Giving is essential to your economic success (Prov 3:9-10; 11:24; Hag 1:3-11; Mal 3:8-12) and also to your prophet's encouragement (II Chron 31:4; Phil 4:10,14-18).
- E. Incentive compensation is based on the minister's ruling and studying (I Timothy 5:17).
- F. God's gift + member-provided time will bear fruit (Proverbs 14:4 cp I Timothy 4:15).

XXV. The **PROBLEM**: Prophets of God are but men, and so they fight sin and temptation as others.

- A. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are – calling fire down from heaven in a revival service and then afterwards desiring death - what a great comfort (James 5:17)!
- B. Peter and Paul made similar professions admitting their humanity (Acts 10:26; 14:15).
- C. Paul admitted he had the treasure of his ministerial gift in an earthen vessel (II Cor 4:7).
- D. For this reason, the prophets of God are to take heed to themselves (I Tim 4:16; 6:6-12).
- E. Corrupting a prophet can take down a whole church, and Satan knows this simple fact.

XXVI. The **PRAYERS**: Prophets of God need the saints to pray for God's blessing upon their work.

- A. Even the Lord Jesus prayed all night before He ordained His apostles (Luke 6:12-16).
- B. When the apostles ordained deacons to save their precious time, they prayed (Acts 6:6).
- C. Teachers at Antioch fasted and prayed before and after the Spirit's call (Acts 13:1-3).
- D. Paul begged for the prayers of God's saints for blessings on him (Eph 6:19; Col 4:2-4).
- E. He was not ashamed to ask saints to pray for him (I Thes 5:25; II Thes 3:1; Heb 13:18).

#### Conclusion:

1. How should I pray for God's prophets? Consider the points we have just covered from Scripture.
2. How should I treat God's prophets? Consider the points we have just covered from Scripture.
3. How thankful are you for the men of God who have been faithful to preach to you the truth of God?