

Dear Deborah,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You said that you were told that after Christ, no more prophets would be sent. You said you were somewhat concerned by that statement due to the "five-fold ministry" of Ephesians 4:11. You asked us to help you understand why a Christian would think that prophets were no longer needed.

The concept of the five-fold ministry comes from Ephesians 4:11-13 which states, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." These verses have caused some to believe that God is restoring the offices of apostle and prophet in the church today since the body of Christ is not built up to unity in the faith and become mature, attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

There is a problem with that logic since it contradicts Ephesians 2:20, which informs us that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." If the apostles and prophets were the foundation of the church, what was their role? In 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, the Apostle Paul lists a diversity of gifts given to those possessing the holy spirit of God, one of which was prophecy (verse 10). The reason these gifts were bestowed upon the early church at Pentecost was to help them show new converts what the future kingdom of Christ would be like on earth. Although the disciples were given special gifts and were able to perform miracles and prophesy, only the Apostles could pass on these gifts to others.

New converts to Christianity needed to see miracles because they did not yet have the Gospels of the New Testament to read and study. Acts, Revelation and the letters of Paul, Peter, John and others were in the process of being written. When the Apostles passed off the scene, so did the powers they possessed. By that time, the Bible was completed so that visible miracles and prophesying were no longer necessary. Instead, the Christian's foundation was to be based solely on faith (Hebrews 11:1) obtained through the study of God's holy word (Romans 10:17). The Apostles and prophets completed their mission by giving us the word of God, which is recorded in the Bible. The Bible contains everything the church needs to know to grow, thrive and fulfill God's mission (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

In regard to the miraculous gifts of the spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul states, "But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. . . . And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:8, 13)

We hope we have answered your question as to the important role prophets played in the early church and why they are no longer needed today. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio