

PROPHECY, VISIONS AND SPEAKING IN TONGUES: PRACTICES IN C&S CHURCH



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INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit is a divine personality, who has a definite function in the world. A study of the scripture reveals that the Holy Spirit has been very active. His activity has been shown in regard to the universe and the people of the world. In the Old Testament, the Spirit had a "Come and go" ministry. At Pentecost, He came to dwell with the believers and abide in the living Church of Jesus Christ. In 1Cor. 12, it was stated that we have nine manifestations of Holy Spirit. But all these worketh that one and same Spirit divided to every man severally as He willed. Among these Nine Manifestations of the Holy Spirit are Prophecy, Visions, Speaking in Tongues and Discerning Spirit which will be discussed in this paper.

PROPHECY: What is Prophecy?

The Hebrew word that is translated "to prophecy" means "to flow forth". It carries the thought "to bubble forth like a fountain, to let drop, to lift up, to tumble forth, and to spring forth". The Greek word that is translated "to prophecy" means "to speak for another". It means to speak for God, or to be His spokesman.

Prophecy is a pure gift of God freely given for a purpose. Prophecy is *Central Truth* in supernatural utterance in a known tongue. It is the most important of the three Gifts of inspiration or utterance because it takes the other two – diverse kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues to equal prophecy. Paul said "*greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interprets.....*" (1 Cor. 14:5). Prophecy is supernaturally speaking in a language that is understood in the natural realm. Prophecy is God's Word to us.

Biblical significance and relevance of Prophecy

- a) It brings edification, exhortation and Comfort to the people of God (1 Cor. 14:3).
- b) It is used for future foretelling
- c) Through this gift of prophecy, we can speak supernaturally not only unto men but also unto God.
- d) Through prophecy we can enjoy fellowship with God in the Spirit which is beyond anything we have known before. It can be used in your prayer life

WHO IS A PROPHET/PROPHETESS?

A Prophet is one who has visions and revelations of the word of God. Prophets are being assigned duties as messengers of the Almighty God. They are set up to guide the people to toe the way of the Lord as well as restore them to God whenever they go astray. They are regarded as watchmen (Ezekiel 3:17) as well as seers (2 Sam.24:11). They are able to find out hidden things or thoughts (1 Kings 14:1-6) and pray for others.

A Prophet is someone who speaks God's message. This may include telling what would happen and any kind of divine message. Sometimes when the Spirit of God took control of Prophets, they lost some or all control over their speech and actions or were not aware of what was happening around them. We have major and minor Prophets. The major and minor Prophets are described by their work and achievements.

Prophets' Attributes are detailed in God's Word and as follows:

- a) An uncompromising individual: Isaiah 1 – They will say what God has told them to say, no matter who it offends or who

disagrees. They always stand alone as God separates them for His purpose;

- b) They spend quality time in prayer and communion – this is where God reveals Himself to them
- c) They have integrity: they will not lie nor will they compromise God's word;
- d) Their message will intensify true awe of God: The truth of their words will prick the heart of the hearer;
- e) They will interpret and make clear the purpose and will of God. They have the ability to explain clearly to any who inquires; and
- f) They will impart depth and dimension concerning God's Word to those who will receive their message: those who seek them out and accept their message will become enlightened and blessed.

The Objectives

The mission of a Prophet includes revelation of the divine message to man. They spread the kingdom and truth of God on earth i.e. evangelising and also infusing courage in man and extending peace and happiness among men; and they insist that God's commandments must be kept and obeyed. The basis of their work is faith in the power of God.

The Old Testament Prophets revealed the nature of God to Israel and surrounding nations. Abraham expressed God's Fatherhood to Israel and the Gentile nations. Hosea demonstrated God's redemptive love, His faithfulness and forgiveness in the midst of Israel's unfaithfulness. Jeremiah demonstrated God's Sovereign response to Israel's sin. Yet Moses emerged as the principal Prophet speaking for God to Israel. He experienced God's very Presence, and listened as God declared His own nature for the entire world to know, compassionate and gracious. God used Moses to reveal more about Himself than any other Prophet. Some seventeen names of God flow through Moses writings, such as Jehovah-Jireh, God our Provider and Jehovah-Nissei, God our Banner. Each name presented another aspect of God's Person. Israel became the only nation on earth to know God's mind and heart concerning itself and the surrounding Gentile nations. Kings of Israel consulted with the Prophets on matters of the State. Those who disregarded His voice, though Israel's kings, suffered and died.

In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth exemplified, to the highest degree, God's Prophet and God's Prophetic voice on earth. The masses of Israel recognized Jesus as Prophet, fulfilling the prophetic office so clearly stated in the Old Testament. And Jesus referred to Himself as Prophet; Jesus spoke uniquely as the Father's Prophet.

Calling and Office of a Prophet

- a) He speaks from the impulse of a sudden inspiration, from the light of a sudden revelation at the moment. The idea of speaking from sudden revelations seems to be fundamental, as relating either to future events or the mind of the Spirit in general.
- b) A Prophet speaks by direct divine inspiration, an immediate revelation – not something he thought of, but something given at the spur of the moment by sudden inspiration.
- c) To stand in the office of a Prophet, one is first of all a minister of the Gospel, separated and called to the ministry with the calling of God upon his life. The Prophet is a ministry gift.
 - i. A Prophet is first of all a Preacher or a Teacher of Word
 - ii. *"But he (Prophet) that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation and comfort"* I Cor. 14:3
 - iii. A layman may prophesy, but you are not a prophet just because you prophesy; though Paul encouraged the entire church at Corinthian to covet to prophesy (I Cor. 14.1). Yet the answer to the question "Are all Prophets?" is obviously "No" (I Cor. 12:29).

Codes, Conducts and Practices

A nation without a conscience is as good as dead and that is what this country is and we are all responsible for it. Both individually or collectively, we need to rise up to the challenge of prophetic mission and thus save the nation from collapse. Though every Nigerian claims to be a religious person, little reference is made to God in our political, economic and social decisions, let alone actions.

Prophet, by its very nature prophetic word, to which we are all called, is a hard one which unsettles and upsets the status quo. To build a virile nation, Christian Prophets need not to

wait to be consulted before they speak out against social ills of the society, whether welcomed or unwelcomed (2 Tim. 4:1-2). They should rise up to the defense of the poor and be seen to be identified with them. They should uphold the faith; preach the gospel and continually build the kingdom.

WHAT IS VISION?

It is pertinent to state that we have two kinds of Vision: they are (a) Spiritual vision and (b) Open vision.

Spiritual vision: A person has a vision in his spirit, or sees in his spirit. For example when Saul was on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-8) he encountered God. The Bible says about Saul that "..... when his eyes were OPENED, he saw no man....." Saul's eyes were shut when he had this vision and saw Jesus. Paul didn't see the Lord with his physical eyes. He saw into the spirit realm with eyes closed.

An Open vision: This is the highest type of vision. When this happens, one's physical senses are suspended. His physical eyes are not closed. He possesses all his physical capabilities, yet he sees and hears in the realm of the Spirit; for example, Revelation 1 says that John saw the Lord in an open vision.

Kenneth E. Hagin narrated a personal experience which goes thus *"This is the kind of vision I had which appeared to me in 1959 and taught me about the Ministry of prophet. I saw Jesus walk in to my room. I heard His footsteps. I saw Him enter my room just as plainly as any man I have ever seen in my life. I saw Him sit down beside my bed. I heard His voice as plainly as any man's voice I have ever heard in my life"*. Each one of us has our own life experience/s in one way or the other that the Lord has revealed Himself to us in a wonderful manner.

MINISTRY OF TONGUES & INTERPRETATION

What is speaking in Tongue?

In order to understand the true meaning of tongues-speaking, it is necessary to go back to history. This is the awareness of "God present and God active".

Speaking in tongues was a common practice in the early church ministry. Tongues-speaking originated from Greek words "Glossolalia" – "glossa" meaning (tongue) and "lalia" meaning (speak). This subject matter has had a considerable and very controversial connotation since the inception or the life period of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Yet one quality which cannot be disputed is present in the gift of Tongues-speaking; and that is, vitality, positive, vibrating and appealing prophetic note.

Tongue speaking, that is, ability to speak in other languages not learned. There are many records in the New Testament showing various believers receiving and using the gift. 1 Cor. Chapters 12, 13 and 14, treated speaking in tongues as an indication that the possession and use was considered very important in the early church ministry. When the awaiting disciples received the promised Comforter, ten days after Jesus' ascension at Jerusalem, the miraculous manifestation of Tongues-speaking happened. In fact, this was recorded as the first miracle of the New Testament after Christ has left his disciples. 1 Cor. 12:28-30 mention speaking in tongues. Indeed, verse 30 of this Chapter emphasized on diversities of tongues (different kinds of tongues) which is regarded as a definite ministry set by God in the Church. Being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterances in the private prayer life of the believer is not the same as a ministry of tongues. What the Word of God is talking about here in 1 Cor. 12:28 and 30 is ministering to others through tongues and interpretation, as a ministry gift.

Biblical significance and relevance

- ✓ The Ministry of diversity of tongues and interpretation is to be ministered in the public assembly in order to bless and help others
- ✓ Speaking in tongues without interpretation is communing with God alone in a person's prayer life.
- ✓ Speaking in tongues is primarily a devotional gift to be used in the believer's prayer life in the praise and worship of God. I Cor. 14:18