

THE SEVEN MINISTRIES OF THE PROPHET

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March 15th, 1997

INTRODUCTION

There is, throughout the Bible, a model which God has used to describe the Church's structure, processes, and history, without calling attention to the model, itself. The model is so pervasive throughout the Bible, that it is surprising that no one has previously called attention to it. The essence of the model is its seven-foldness.

For example, there are seven churches in the Book of Revelation which existed physically at the time of the prophet John's writing. But, his writing was for the end-time, the time in which we now find ourselves. So, those seven churches are to exist spiritually, in the present time. To say this is to apply two of Steve Meeks² principles for prophetic interpretation, which say that prophecies are fulfilled first in the natural and next in the spiritual and that the succeeding fulfillments expand in scope. Thus, the seven churches in Asia were a type of a spiritual reality for the end-time.

Another kind of example of the seven-fold model is Jesus' own description of His ministry, delivered in His home-town synagogue at Nazareth [Luke 4:18-19], at the time when He identified Himself as a prophet. He read the first six of a list of seven ministry items from Isaiah 61. Paraphrased, He said that He had come to 1) Herald liberty to those captive, 2) Comfort those who mourn, 3) Call out the Lord's acceptable timing, 4) Preach the dispatch of destitution, 5) Heal those whose hearts don't work right, and 6) Herald the restoration of vision to those who can't see. But, Jesus stopped reading, there. What He did not read in Isaiah 61:2 was 7) Call out the day of pay-back. That final element of Jesus' ministry is reserved for His coming appearance.

The two examples above showed Church structure and Church process. There are many more of both in the Bible. For instance, Hebrews 6:1-2 gives Christ's doctrinal principles for the Christian walk to maturity. Psalm-51 shows David's counterpart to that progression. The seven Jewish feasts, the seven Romans-12 gifts of grace, and many, many other "sevens" all fit the same basic pattern in structure, process, or sequence.

The pattern is that which God commissioned Ezekiel to carefully present to the people [Ezek. 43:10-12], the pattern for the spiritual Temple of God. The pattern is most generally stated here as a sequence of 1) Faith, 2) Truth, 3) Spirit, 4) Power, 5)

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² The Last Great Revival, by Steve Meeks, Calvary Pubs., Houston, TX, 1994, ISBN: 0-9630425-1-3.

Ministry, 6) Doctrine, and 7) Maturity. That is, all the sevens of Church structure, process, and sequence partition nicely into the seven characterizations just listed. Observing together all the partitioned sevens then defines the seven listed characterizations, individually.

But, the Plan of the Temple is not what is to be covered, here. We have simply given this introduction to show how the seven prophetic ministries fit into the whole picture of God's structures, processes and sequences for the end-times. The Temple teaching is presented in a different venue.

THE SEVEN PROPHETIC MINISTRIES

1. THE PSALMIST/REFRESHER/RELIEVER (Faith Context). As the title suggests, the prototype for this ministry was the prophet David [2 Sam. 23:1-2]. All his life, David was a psalm-writer. But, his earliest ministry was playing his harp, to the relief of Saul. When David played, Saul was refreshed, spiritually [1 Sam. 16:23]. This same word, "refreshed", was used by Paul to describe how Onesiphorus ministered to him in Rome and Ephesus [2 Tim. 1:16]. And, it was used by Peter to refer to the effect that the presence of Jesus will have in the coming times of restoration, spoken of by all the prophets [Acts 3:19-20]. It is literally a lifting up of the soul.

David dealt with the very foundations of the faith of his people. He built a new place of worship, into which God's presence moved, the Tabernacle of David [2 Sam. 6:17]. He changed forever the manner of the ministry of the priesthood to God [1 Chr. 15,16], instituting the "ordinance of David" [Ezr. 3:10]. The ordinance of David called for priestly praise, worship, and recording, directly before the ark of the presence of God. There was no mention of a separating curtain in David's Tabernacle.

By the time of Jesus, the Jewish Church had become corrupt, and there was again a curtain separating the priests from their God. This time, Jesus, the Son of David tore it, as a reminder of the forsaken ordinance of David [Mat. 27:51]. But, it was James, in Acts 15, who made the connection between simplified worship and David's Tabernacle. Bad Pharisaical teaching in the New Testament Church had placed a stumbling block in the way of the gentile believers. The issue was whether or not Christians had to accept Jewish circumcision, in order to be saved.

James, speaking by the Holy Ghost, quoted [Amos 9:11], and said that the real issue should not be the formalities of the institutional church, but the basics of faith and worship, as in David's Tabernacle. (The first church works, so to speak.) This word was shared with those Gentiles new to the faith, in Antioch, by Judas Barsabas and Silas, who were prophets [Acts 15:28]. It was a great relief to those who were the first to be known as Christians. The Antioch Christians were spiritually relieved by the Judean prophets, Judas and Silas, just as previously their brothers in Judea had been physically relieved by those at Antioch [Acts 11:28-30]. Thus, the doors of Jesus' Church were thrown open. Salvation would be by grace, through faith, and not by works [Eph. 2:8-9].

This prophetic ministry is in the Faith Church, as typified by Ephesus. This is the church that hated the Nicolaitans, literally those who would overcome the laity. This ministry is to break through the legal, pharisaical formalities of the institutional

church, to get back to the basics of praise, worship, and recording by the believer, in direct contact with God. In fact, it is for not doing the first works that this Church is criticized by Jesus. It must concentrate on leading the believer immediately into the presence of God. This is a ministry of prophetic relief, while building again the fallen tabernacle of David [Acts 15:16].

2. THE ENCOURAGER/COMFORTER (Truth Context). This use of the word, “encourager,” is in the building up sense of [1 Ths. 5:11], which combines the meanings of beseeching, comforting, and consoling. The Greek is *paraklesis*, which means literally to call one alongside (for aid). It connects prophecy with comfort and truth in the sense of [Acts 15:32], describing the follow-up ministry of Judas Barsabas and Silas at Antioch, after they had come to the spiritual relief of the brethren there.

An Old Testament example of this ministry is Nathan, who encouraged David in his relationship with God [2 Sam.7] and later confronted David over his sin against God [2 Sam. 12]. Nathan first comforted David, but then brought him to the truth about himself. Nathan’s very name describes his ministry. It is “giving, to bring forth.” [Psalm 51] sets forth the result of Nathan’s ministry. That Psalm enumerates David’s seven foundational steps toward edification, which match the sequence: faith, truth, spirit, power, ministry, doctrine, and maturity.

Another Old Testament example is Zechariah, who was raised up by God to encourage the Church which had just come out of seventy years of bondage in Babylon, and which was to rebuild the Temple. However, what Zechariah wrote then is also an encouragement now to the generation which is coming out of seventy years of bondage in “Babylon,” and is to rebuild God’s spiritual Temple. For, the book of Zechariah is essentially a roadmap to the New Testament book of Revelation.

In the New Testament, the counterpart of Nathan encouraging David is Barnabas encouraging Paul [Acts 13:2]. This he did until it came time to encourage another, when Barnabas teamed with John Mark, his nephew, who was vacillating and needed reassurance. As soon as Barnabas left with Mark, the prophet Silas stepped into the role vacated by Barnabas. Silas, who had come to Antioch on a matter of relief dealing with basic faith, now moved into the role of supporter, traveling companion, and encourager of Paul. At the corporate level, this ministry is to edify or build up an entire church, as a unified body. Together, Barnabas and Paul strengthened the souls of the disciples at Antioch. Judas and Silas also performed this ministry to the brethren.

This prophetic ministry is in the Truth Church, typified by Pergamos, the church of faithful witness. But, even here the lie of the Nicolaitans has taken hold, and stumbling-blocks are cast before the laity. This ministry is to prophetically build up and strengthen individuals, even leaders, in what the truth really is. This is the “jump-starting” ministry. It is like the recoverable boosters for a Shuttle launch vehicle. It is to get a servant of God up and running. It is also to build up and strengthen the brethren as corporate bodies, even entire churches.

3. THE EXHORTER/ANNOUNCER (Spirit Context). This is not the same kind of exhortation as for the previous, in the sense of comfort-giving. The word, “exhort,” is not used in the Old Testament, and its New Testament use uniformly means comfort-giving. The nearest meaning to the present use is one who carries and gives a verbal

message or “signal.” This is a prophetic announcer, in the sense of “... *show you plainly* ...” [John 16:25].

The Old Testament prototype of this prophetic ministry is Samuel. His name means “*to hear attentively, to show forth.*” His characteristics were those of being straight-forward, obedient, and directly to the point. When Samuel showed up on an errand for the Lord, the elders trembled [1 Sam. 16:4]. Samuel heard from the Lord and did what he heard. He was a ‘real-time’ prophet. That is, he continually heard from the Lord during the performance of the Lord’s task. Elijah was also an exhorter, like Samuel. Samuel laid on hands, anointed with oil, and the Holy Spirit filled the recipient thereof [1 Sam. 16:13]. The exhorter is sent by God to a specific place at a specific time to speak the Word of God and show forth what the Lord is about to do.

The prophet, John the Baptist, was an exhorter. He called the people to repentance, to prepare the way of the Lord. He was very plain-spoken. Another New Testament exhorter was the prophet Agabus. He first was sent to warn the people that a drought was at hand [Acts 11:28]. These exhorters are like football quarter-backs. They are signal callers. They call out signals for plays sent into the game by the Coach. The word, “*signal,*” used in [Acts 11:28] is “*semaino,*” from which we get the English word, “*semaphore.*”

This prophetic ministry is in the Spirit Church, typified by Smyrna, which name means the oil of anointing. This is a church troubled by tribulation and blasphemy and false witness. It looks like it’s going down to death, but its path is to life. This ministry is to prophetically exhort the saints to hear God for themselves by faith, and to receive the Holy Spirit. That is, the ministry is to lead the saints to spirituality, the things of the Spirit, such as prophecy and the anointing. It is also to bear the warnings of God.

4. THE WATCHMAN/INTERCESSOR (Power Context). A watchman is someone who watches over something, in the sense of guarding it. He both guards and speaks. The characteristics and context of the end-times prophetic Watchman are best seen in the Old Testament. There, we see that the Watchman is associated with such end-times concepts as The Fall of Babylon, travailing like women in birth, the threshing floor [Isa. 21], and the day of visitation on the Church [Mic. 7:4]. Ezekiel, who brings us the detailed description of God’s spiritual Temple, was set by God as a Watchman, bringing His warning to both the wicked and the righteous. That is, a watchman deals with both the unsaved and the saved. Habakkuk was such a watchman. He guarded and spoke God’s end-times vision for the Church [Hab. 2:1-3]. Paul quoted him, in speaking God’s vision to both the Church and to the unbelievers in Antioch [Acts 13:13-49].

The prophet, Habakkuk, operated as both watchman and intercessor. His ministry as watchman was to the Church. His ministry as intercessor was to God. Concerning the end-times, Habakkuk interceded with God, that in His wrath He would remember mercy [Hab. 3:2].

The New Testament example of this ministry was Ananias, whom Jesus sent to restore Paul’s sight in Damascus [Acts 9:10-18]. Jesus gave Ananias a vision of Paul’s ministry. Ananias relayed this vision to Paul, and laid hands on him so that his physical vision might be miraculously restored and he might be filled with the Holy Ghost. Miraculous signs, laying on of hands, and filling with the Holy Ghost are the marks of this prophetic ministry. The watchman/intercessor bears the Lord’s current

vision for the Church and delivers it. And, the speaking of the vision is authenticated by power-miracles and signs.

This prophetic ministry is in the Power Church, typified by Thyatira, a church of increasing works. But this church tolerates the false prophetess, Jezebel, that manipulator of the leadership. This ministry is to prophetically speak God's vision for the Church, to the saved and unsaved alike, and to demonstrate God's miraculous power that attends such prophetic preaching and intercession. It is also to watch over both the vision and the Church.

5. THE COUNSELOR/DELIVERANCE MINISTER (Ministry Context). If you have heard the descriptor, "a Pastor's Pastor," that is what this prophetic ministry is. The Old Testament prototype for this prophetic minister is Elihu, Job's counselor [Job 33]. He was Spirit-filled and prophetic at Job's request [Job 33:6]. That is, he was counseling, prophetically, upon request. He dealt in the understanding of relationships. He led Job to the understanding of the relationship between God and Job. He told Job exactly how God works with man. He explained about God's power and authority and man's insufficiency and need to trust God. Elihu spoke not just to Job, but to all "*wise men*" [Job 34:2]. He explained to them the precise methods by which God operates with man. And, all the while, Elihu was speaking by the Spirit. It's five chapters worth. And five is God's ministry number. The key to this prophetic ministry is in [Job 33].

In chapter 33, Elihu explained to Job five times that it was his soul that was being dealt with. Elihu was bringing deliverance for Job's soul. He was showing Job the way for his soul to go from death to life. And, it was Jesus, the ultimate counselor, the way, the truth, and the life [John 14:6], who said that knowledge of Him would remove the burdens of the soul [Mat. 11:28-29]. What He said was that He would "*rest up*" the soul. And, it would be through a relationship. And, this word, "*rest up*," is the same one Paul used, referring to the spiritual refreshing he got from Philemon and from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus [1 Cor. 16:17], who are New Testament examples.

In [Gal. 6:1-2], Paul exhorted those who are 'spiritual' to repair those believers who are overtaken in a fault. The spiritual are to bear one another's burdens so as to fulfill the prescriptions of Christ. For, in Christ, we may give rest to the souls of the burdened. The elders who were called in [James 5] also functioned in this ministry.

This prophetic ministry is in the Ministry Church, typified by Sardis, a church of incomplete works, where many wear defiled garments. This church needs to strengthen those things which are sick and dying. The ministry is to counsel the people prophetically, through the counselor's relationship with The Counselor. It is done on request of those seeking rest for their souls. It is to prophetically lead them to see the relationship between themselves and God. It is to first deliver and then rest their souls. And it is to be done as a service.

6. THE SEER IN THE WORDS OF GOD (to lift up the horn). (Doctrine Context). The Old Testament prototype for this minister was Heman [1 Chr. 25:5]. He was David's Seer in the words of God. He was also a musician, a player of cymbals, who was among the number chosen by name to usher the Ark of God into its new place in the Tabernacle of David [1 Chr. 15:17]. There, he ministered both as a musician and as a giver of thanks to the Lord for His perpetual mercy. Outside the Tabernacle, he was

David's Seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. This latter description has within it two main ideas.

The (Septuagint) Greek for "Seer in the words of God" is quite hard to render into English. Literally, this word "seer" comprises three Greek words describing one who knocks (as on a door) upward to a king. Then there are three more Greek words which mean "*in the words of God.*" Connected to this first idea by a comma are two more Greek words meaning, "*lifting up a horn.*" Lifting up (exalting) a single horn is most easily connected with the horn of anointing oil [Psa. 92:10]. From the corresponding Hebrew, Heman, as a seer, envisioned in the words of God. That is, the words of God were substantively visual to him. And, his envisioning had to do with lifting up a horn of anointing or salvation. It is Jesus, the Anointed One from the house of David, who is our horn of salvation [Luke 1:69].

In the New Testament, there is a Greek word which manages to capture this kind of envisioning. It means, literally, a mental putting together, an understanding. Paul said that God gave him such understanding of the mystery of Christ by revelation [Eph. 3:2-5]. He said that this kind of understanding is given to prophets and apostles by the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament shows a group of such ministers, including Simon, Lucius, and Manaen, lifting up the horn to anoint Paul and Barnabas for service, by order of the Holy Spirit [Acts 13:1-3]. They are prophets and teachers. They are ministers to God in the same way as Heman in David's Tabernacle. And, the Holy Spirit speaks to them during such ministry.

The Seers in the words of God work in the Doctrine Church, typified by Laodicea. That church is the one blinded by pride in its own knowledge, thinking it has it all, not knowing it has nothing. These prophetic ministers work at the highest governing level, formulating operational instructions [2 Chr. 29:25]. The level of these instructions even go down to the words of the praise songs [2 Chr. 29:30]. That is, these seers write instructions (even books) about how to do things in worship and in ministering to the Lord. These seers are teachers, but at the corporate level. Because they deal with how God wants things done, they deal in what the New Testament calls doctrine. Seers in the words of God are promulgators of corporate-level doctrine. In the end-times warfare context, these seers are like the discerning children of Issachar, who could see what the Church ought to do [1 Chr. 12:32].

7. THE JUDGE/INTERPRETER (Completion or Maturity Context). The Old Testament prototype of this final prophetic ministry is Daniel (God is Judge). His characteristics were those of being able to judge things that combined both the physical and the spiritual. His judgment of the physical was on a spiritual basis. Even unbelievers were able to attribute his apparent understanding and wisdom to an indwelling holy God [Dan. 5:11]. He interpreted spiritually even the most mysterious physical happenings [Dan. 5:26-28], discerning God's will. And, his judgments in the physical were of the utmost seriousness and effect [Dan. 5:30].

This ministry combines prophecy with spiritual wisdom, spiritual judgment, and knowledge of the will of God. Notice that we are not talking about those who are wise in the wisdom of this physical world. We are talking about spiritual men (genre, not gender), who operate in the prophetic, to the making of judgments in the Church. We

are talking about those who speak wisdom among the mature [1 Cor. 2:6]. And, these judgments are of several sorts. First is making comparisons of spiritual things [1 Cor. 2:13]. Then, there is the sizing up of things, through spiritual discernment [1 Cor. 2:14]. A spiritual man makes these kinds of judgments, but is not subject to the absolute judgment of any man [1 Cor. 2:15]. We are to absolutely judge not the man, but what the man says [1 Cor. 14:37], [1 Cor. 10:15] among the mature.

Such prophetic wisdom comes as a supernatural gift [1 Cor. 12:8]. It is to be applied in meekness [Gal. 6:1], [Jas. 3:13], which is a quality of the mature. Those who operate in this way are referred to as “*fathers*.” And, Paul says that there are not many of them [1 Cor. 4:15]. They are men who understand the will of God and who buy back the time lost to evil days [Eph. 5:17].

The shining example of such a person in the New Testament is Stephen, the deacon [Acts 6:8-7:60]. He it was who showed forth such dynamic power and wonders and miracles that he drew the attention of the Jewish church hierarchy. They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke (wisdom - an attribute of the Holy Spirit [Ex. 31:3]), so they brought a false accusation against him. In reply, he taught the institutional church leaders so magnificently that they were cut to the heart. So they killed him. But, even as he was dying, he saw the glory of God and testified that fact to his killers. And, in mercy, he prayed that this sin might not be laid to his killers’ charge for judgment.

This prophetic ministry is in the Maturity Church, typified by Philadelphia. It is the Church for which Jesus opens the door. The prophetic ministry here is to apply spiritual wisdom given by the Holy Spirit to the judgments needed in governing the mature church. It is a ministry for those who know the will of God, “*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heaven might be known, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God.*” [Eph. 3:10] And, this spiritual judgment is to be tempered with mercy. Because those who show no mercy in judgment shall be subject to judgment [Jas. 2:13]. It was Jesus who rebuked the Pharisees [Mat.12:7], the ‘fathers’ of the institutional church, about not knowing what mercy meant in the context of judging. He was quoting [Hos. 6:6], God’s rebuke against Israel’s legalistic hypocrisy.

CONCLUSION

Restoration of the Prophetic Ministries. In looking back over the seven prophetic ministries, it is apparent that we have already seen the first five of them manifested in the Church. The Psalmist we have seen, such as Dudley Hall³, cutting prophetically through the trappings of the institutional church, to get back to the fundamentals of faith and worship. Encouragers, we have seen, with Neil Anderson’s⁴ dealing with the truth being a good example. Prophetic Exhorters we have seen, from itinerant prophets such as Cindy Jacobs⁵ to Internet ministries. Watchmen/Intercessors we have seen, such as Rees Howells.⁶ Peter Wagner⁷ has

³ Grace Works, by Dudley Hall, Servant Publications, Ann Arbor, 1992, ISBN: 0-89283-767-5.

⁴ The Bondage Breaker, by Neil Anderson, Harvest House, Eugene, OR, ISBN: 0-89081-996-3.

⁵ The Voice of God, by Cindy Jacobs, Regal Books, Ventura, CA., 1995, ISBN: 0-8307-1773-0.

⁶ Rees Howells, Intercessor, by Norman Grubb, Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, PA, 1952, ISBN: 0-87508-219-X.

documented that ministry for today. The prophetic Counselor we have seen, in ministers such as Neil Anderson⁸, getting down to the hands-on fundamentals of relationships. But, Judges we have not yet seen. And, Seers in the words of God, we are only just now beginning to see.

It would appear that the seven ministries of the prophet are being restored to match God's modern historical restoration of the Church. That is, God has restored the churches of Faith, Truth, Spirit, Power, and Ministry. So, the prophetic ministries in those churches have also been restored. God is now restoring the church of Doctrine in His sixth move, and the corresponding sixth prophetic ministry is now also being restored. We can expect the Judge to be restored at about the time of the seventh, final move of God's restoration. In fact, it is the prophetic ministries of the Seer in the Word of God and of the Judge that we see operating in Revelation 11 in the hands of the "Two Prophets." They shall be the final witnesses and martyrs in the time of the Great Tribulation.

The Unknown Prophets. In the above exposition of the seven prophetic ministries, the New Testament examples of such ministers were relative unknowns. That is, the prophets were not apostles, but were lesser figures, some of whom functioned as deacons or teachers. The names of some were not even given. This relative anonymity of the prophets is in line with prophecies that are now being heard in the Church, with respect to the current (sixth) move of God. It is now being prophesied that the prophets of the end-times moves will be anonymous. They will not be widely known, outside of prophetic circles. There is Bible support for this view. But, that is another story.

⁷ Prayer Shield, by C. Peter Wagner, Regal Books, Ventura, CA., 1992, ISBN: 0-8307-1573-8.

⁸ Victory Over the Darkness, by Neil T. Anderson, Regal Books, Ventura, CA., 1990, ISBN: 0-8307-1375-1.