3ABN SABBATH SCHOOL PANEL
04 – Tuesday – October 20, 2026

Functions of New Testament Prophets

What do 1 Corinthians 14:3, Ephesians 4:11-13, and Revelation 22:6 tell us about the role of New Testament prophets?

1 Corinthians 14:3: "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men."

1. **Prophets build up and strengthen the church.** Their messages promote spiritual growth, deepen faith, and help believers mature in Christ.
2. **Prophets exhort and comfort God's people.** They call believers to faithfulness while bringing hope and encouragement during trials.

In the body of Christ metaphor ***(1 Cor. 12:27, 28)***, prophets are mentioned after apostles, who also received revelations from God. According **to 1 Corinthians 14:3: "He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men"**

Ephesians 4:11–13 "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets… for the equipping of the saints…"

1. **Prophets equip believers for ministry.** The prophetic gift helps prepare church members to serve effectively rather than leaving all ministry to church leaders.
2. **Prophets promote unity and spiritual maturity.** Their ministry helps the church grow toward "the unity of the faith" and "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

These persons exist for "the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"

Revelation 22:6 — "The Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place."

1. **Prophets reveal what God wants His servants to understand.** God uses prophetic revelation to communicate His plans and prepare His people for coming events.
2. **Prophecy confirms that God directs history.** The prophetic message assures believers that the future is not uncertain to God and that His promises will be fulfilled.

These verses above, however helpful, **do not present a comprehensive view of all that New Testament prophets did**. Nevertheless, much of what **they did reflects what prophets in the Old Testament also had done, thus providing continuity with the prophetic gift**.

According to the New Testament, prophets served several important functions in the early church:

1. They proclaimed God's inspired message

"But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men."
—1 Corinthians 14:3, NKJV

Prophets communicated timely messages from God to strengthen, challenge, and encourage His people.

2. They helped establish and strengthen the church

"Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."
—Ephesians 2:20, NKJV

Alongside the apostles, prophets helped establish the church in the truth, always resting upon Christ as the chief cornerstone.

3. They equipped believers for ministry

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets… for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry."
—Ephesians 4:11–12, NKJV

Their ministry prepared church members to use their gifts and participate actively in God's mission.

4. They promoted unity and spiritual maturity

"Till we all come to the unity of the faith… to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."
—Ephesians 4:13, NKJV

Prophetic ministry helped protect the church from deception and guided believers toward unity, stability, and Christlike character.

5. They revealed future events

"And one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world."
—Acts 11:28, NKJV

God sometimes revealed future circumstances through prophets so the church could prepare and respond wisely.

6. They gave specific guidance to the church

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”
—Acts 13:2, NKJV

Prophetic revelation helped the church recognize God’s direction regarding mission, leadership, and ministry.

7. They confirmed and encouraged believers

“Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.”
—Acts 15:32, NKJV

Prophets encouraged believers to remain faithful and strengthened churches during doctrinal controversy and spiritual difficulty.

8. They sometimes delivered personal warnings

“Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt.’”
—Acts 21:11, NKJV

Agabus warned Paul about the suffering awaiting him. Such warnings did not remove personal choice but prepared believers for what lay ahead.

9. They exposed hidden conditions of the heart

“The secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God.”
—1 Corinthians 14:25, NKJV

Prophetic messages could bring conviction, reveal spiritual need, and lead people to recognize God’s presence.

10. They were to operate in an orderly and accountable manner

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”
—1 Corinthians 14:29, NKJV

Prophetic claims were not accepted blindly. Their messages were tested by the church and measured against God’s revealed truth.

In summary: New Testament prophets did more than predict the future. They proclaimed God's message, strengthened the church, equipped believers, guided mission, warned of danger, exposed sin, encouraged faithfulness, and helped prepare God's people for what was ahead.