

Rules for Traveling Ministry from the Early Church

This is Chapter 11 of the early Church document called the "*Didache*". This document is called by other early Church writers in their documents "The Teaching of the Apostles". It was written in Greek during the time when most of the 12 apostles were still alive. This is Karsopp Lake's translation into English. The bold highlights were added by Roger Sapp.

1 Whosoever then comes and teaches you all these things aforesaid, receive him.

2 But if the teacher himself be perverted and teach another doctrine to destroy these things, do not listen to him, but if his teaching be for the increase of righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.

3 **And concerning the Apostles and Prophets**, act thus according to the ordinance of the Gospel.

4 Let every Apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord,

5 **but let him not stay more than one day, or if need be a second as well; but if he stay three days, he is a false prophet.**

6 **And when an Apostle goes forth let him accept nothing but bread till he reach his night's lodging; but if he ask for money, he is a false prophet.**

7 Do not test or examine any prophet who is speaking in a spirit, "for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven."

8 **But not everyone who speaks in a spirit is a prophet, except he have the behavior of the Lord. From his behavior, then, the false prophet and the true prophet shall be known.**

9 **And no prophet who orders a meal in a spirit shall eat of it: otherwise he is a false prophet.**

10 And every prophet who teaches the truth, if he do not what he teaches, is a false prophet.

11 But no prophet who has been tried and is genuine, though he enact a worldly mystery of the Church, if he teach not others to do what he does himself, shall be judged by you: for he has his judgment with God, for so also did the prophets of old.

12 **But whosoever shall say in a spirit 'Give me money, or something else,' you shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others in want, let none judge him.**

Roger Sapp comments: Concern is expressed here by the early church about a gifted ministry such as a prophet or apostle using his gift to further his financial situation. He is considered a false prophet if he:

1. **"...stay more than one day..."** in verse 5. We must remind the reader that Christian prophets and apostles arrived generally unannounced in the time of the early Church simply because they lacked the technology to travel quickly and communicate over distances. The rest of the *Didache* encourages Christians to host these kinds of ministries but with some

- restrictions. No gifted ministry would be able to “move in” on a Christian host and take advantage of them simply because they were a prophet. They could only stay one or two days at the most and if they still were there after three days, they were considered to be a false prophet. It seems perhaps that concern about domination is being expressed here.
2. “... **ask for money...**” (Verse 6) In this situation, the prophets in that day did not come at the invitation of the Christian host. The prophet came unannounced and the host was required to house him and provide him food for no longer than 3 days. If the prophet then asked for money as he left, he was considered a false prophet by the church.
 3. “...**from his behavior...**” (Verse 8) Prophets were considered true and false not by their message or prophecies, but primarily by their behavior. As we can see, this determination often had to do with how prophets handled themselves in financial matters. This, of course, agrees with Christ’s statement that a prophet would be known by his fruit (not by his gifts.)
 4. “... **orders a meal in a spirit...**” (Verse 9) If a prophet uses his gift to influence someone to give him a meal or anything else such as a financial gift, he is a false prophet. Again, the early Church believed that Christian prophets could improperly use their gift to obtain financial favors through manipulation.
 5. “...**shall say in a spirit ‘Give me money, or something else,’...**” (Verse 12) Here the Didache tells us that if he asks for money for himself, then he is a false prophet. If he does it for others, then it is permissible.

Our situation has changed somewhat but the principles remain intact. In most cases, in the western Church, apostles and prophets most often travel by invitation to minister at set times in fellowships of believers. They do not just show up at someone’s home and expect to be taken in. However, the principles remain the same. No one should be able to use “revelation” in any form to make someone open their home, supply their needs and give them money. A prophet who uses any form of revelation, suggestions, hints and even guilt in any manner to encourage someone to give anything to him falls under the category of a false prophet. Every servant of Christ must live by His example and His words “freely you have received, freely give.” Christ gave His ministry away freely. If a gifted person fails to give away his ministry and places any kind of price tag on that ministry, they fail Christ. God can and will supply the needs of His servants. This was downloaded from www.allnationsmin.org from the “Pray and Obey” files area.