

Talks – Prophecy – myfishbites.com

Again there's quite a bit of content here, so look through and choose what you need and want! We don't have the complete answers about prophecy but this is a start!

What Is Prophecy?

Prophecy is a God-given revelation of the future, or of the present. In the Old Testament, we find prophets of God, whom God spoke through, to communicate to his people. Today, we live in New Testament times and prophecy is slightly different. It comes to minister to the church. See below (emphasis added).

1 Corinthians 14.1-5 says: Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. **But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.** I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.

Prophecy can come through any member of the body of Christ (the church) who is open to God and the Holy Spirit. However, it would seem that some Christians have a stronger and more direct gift of prophecy – just as every member has a specific gifting from the Holy Spirit. See the bold text in the Bible verses from Joel, below:

Joel 2.28-2: And afterward, **I will pour out my Spirit on all people.** Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

There are many kinds of prophecy, and God speaks in many different ways through varied people. Just like with anything else in the Christian life, we need to be open to God, be right with God and have ears to hear what he is saying.

Biblical Basis of Prophecy

We know that prophecy has its roots in God and not in man. The Bible says this clearly (see below where text is in bold). Prophecy has its origin in God, via the Holy Spirit. Any prophecy that does not glorify God, that is not in line with his written Word (the Bible) or that seems to come from man, is not from God.

2 Peter 1.19-21: And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. **For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

Old Testament Prophecy

We know from the Old Testament that there were specific prophets who communicated God's will. Of course, we have Isaiah, Jeremiah – but there were also many other prophets, and we would do well to read the so-called 'minor prophet' books, as they have much in – and plenty to say about Israel today and the future / end times. (Daniel for example).

We also know from **2 Kings 2** that there were companies of prophets, from Bethel (v3), Jericho (v15). This seems to suggest there were 'schools' or groups of prophets that no doubt learnt and grew together. These companies were organised and heard from God, as we learn from **2 Kings 2.3**:

The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"
"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "but do not speak of it."

Old Testament prophets were also asked to do some unusual things – so be warned! God may well ask you to do and say what seems very strange. Mike Pilavachi from Soul Survivor tells the tale of having to give a word of prophecy. All he had in his head was the song, 'Dancing Queen' by Abba, so he blurted that out. It seemed stupid, but it wasn't. It was just what someone needed to hear. You may not have to do a Hosea and marry an unfaithful woman / prostitute, but God may just ask you to say and do some seemingly strange things. Keep Biblical, but be open to God.

Deuteronomy 13.1-5 – is quite an interesting passage. In this, we learn that in the Mosaic law, false prophets were put to death! As Derek Prince said – if we had that rule today, it may put an end to false prophets!! (Joke!)

Fulfillment of Prophecy

Hundreds of Bible prophecies have been fulfilled completely. For example, Daniel predicted in about 538 BC (in **Daniel 9.24-27**) that Christ would come as Israel's promised Saviour 483 years after the Persian emperor would give the Jews authority to rebuild Jerusalem, which was then in ruins. This was happened hundreds of years later. Many people say that up to 300 prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus, with many other prophecies being fulfilled (such as the return of Israel to their land). Derek Prince believed that there are around 9-10 prophecies about Israel already fulfilled, with just 3 more to go..

Old Testament / New Testament Prophecy

Remember that much of Old Testament prophets spoke against things, but prophecy in the New Testament has changed.

Hebrews 1.1-2 – In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

The Bible tells us that in the past, God used prophets to speak to our forefathers – in different ways and at different times. In these 'last days' (and by this, the Bible means the days since Jesus went back to heaven), God has spoken to us through his Son. By this, the

Bible means that we no longer need a prophet to hear from God. Today, through Jesus, we can directly hear from God. However, there is a spiritual gift of prophecy, which is open to all. How do we know it is open to all?

Well, we'll come back to this, but let's go back to **1 Corinthians 14 verse 1**: *Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.*

The Bible doesn't say, 'seek the gift of prophecy if you're a prophet'. It says, 'eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.' We can therefore see that the gift of prophecy is open to all believers in Jesus. As importantly, the gift has to be exercised with love. Following the way of love (of God, from God) is essential.

Further on in 1 Corinthians 14, we read the following phrase: *"while everybody is prophesying"*. This is talking of a situation in a church where someone who doesn't believe in Jesus walks in and is convicted of their sin through the prophecy of the church. Again, this shows that prophecy is open to all believers today! I heard one pastor make a ridiculous claim that prophecy in 'his' church came only through 'his' preaching. 1 Corinthians 14 and Joel 2 (Acts 2) clearly says different.

Our seeking of prophecy comes from our seeking of God. The Bible says, 'seek God's righteousness (right living, Godliness) first..' So that must be our priority.

Music and Prophecy

Miriam was a prophetess, from the Old Testament. We know this from the Bible:

Numbers 12.1-2: Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this. **Micah 6.4** (God speaking): "I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam."

But she also had a musical gift. In **Exodus 15**, she wrote and sung an amazing song after God delivered the Israelites from Egypt.

There is undoubtedly often a correlation between musical gifting and prophecy, in general for the church body – and through the musicians too:

1 Samuel 10.5 (God speaking to Saul): "After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying."

1 Chronicles 25.1: David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. Here is the list of the men who performed this service...

Note that those chosen were skilled and trained in music and were young and old! Prophecy is often associated with music and worship!

New Testament and Prophecy

Isaiah 50.4 – The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

1 Corinthians 12.7-11: Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Obedience to prophecy – In **Matthew 24.15-22** we read Jesus give a warning about ‘the destroying terror’. Jesus warned people to run across house tops to get out to the hills if they saw this coming, then they would be saved. Strange? Well, some Bible commentaries record an attack on Jerusalem by an Emperor where the city was surrounded. The Christians had read their Bibles and fled to the hills. At the outskirts of the city, the Roman army halted and briefly retreated. It was then, that the Christians escaped. The city was then destroyed. The Word was fulfilled, people’s obedience to it saved their lives.

1 Corinthians 14.1-5, 22-25 (look at the Amplified Version too)

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified..

..Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

So, one of the main purposes of prophecy is to speak to the church. The person who prophesies speaks edification, exhortation and comfort.

Edification – Should make people more effective in serving the Lord.

Exhort – to severely warn or rebuke, admonish, encourage (cheer up), stir up, reconcile. It does not mean confusion, condemnation, fear or discouragement, as none of these come from the Holy Spirit. **Romans 8.1-2** says: *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.* Additionally, **2 Corinthians 5.18** – *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*

Comfort – Holy Spirit is the comforter, same word as in 1 Corinthians 14. Remember **1 Corinthians 13.13** – *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.* So, prophecy must be motivated by and done with a spirit of love for a person. Prophecy doesn't have an agenda, so be careful of those who do seem to have an agenda (self-promotion, financial gain or other ugly and ungodly motivations).

Prophecy Convicting of Sin

We also know that prophecy can convict people of their sin – God using prophecy to speak through a believer into an unbeliever's life and heart.

"But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

Although most churches neither have many unbelievers in, or have much prophecy – it is a real tool of God to reach people. So to not use prophecy seems ungodly and limiting of God. Be warned!

Order of Gifts

Finally, we know that we are to seek prophecy. There is not always an 'order' of spiritual gifts in terms of importance. However, it does seem that 1 Corinthians 14 does accord an order, putting prophecy as a very important spiritual gift.

Prophecy In Part

The written Word of God is truth, complete truth. However, we are imperfect beings and when we make prophecies, or prophetic statements, they are imperfect and incomplete.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10: "Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears."

Paul puts our prophecy into perspective here. There are prophecies, but they will cease – and they only come in part. No prophesy, no word, no prophet is complete. Only when Jesus returns will we see and find true completion, true perfection.

False Prophets, Testing and Receiving Prophecy

The Bible makes it clear that there are and will be false prophets. In **Luke 21.7-9**, Jesus warned his disciples who were asking about the end times..

"Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."

So, some people will come and pretend to be the Messiah, try to fool people into thinking they are Jesus. We have already seen this across history and no doubt this will continue – as Jesus says!

We must 'test the spirits' – which means we need to check on the spiritual atmosphere and what the prophecy says:

1 John 4.1-3: Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

2 Thessalonians 2.1-3: Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

2 Peter 2.1-3: But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

So, aside from knowing good or false prophets by their fruit (a good prophet, person will evidence much good fruit. An evil one will manifest evil and evil things), we will know false prophecy by testing the spirits (seeking God, praying, hearing what he says, lining it up with the Bible – and with what Godly people say). We also know that anything that does not accept Jesus or acknowledge him, is not from God. We can be clear that anything that is contrary to the Word of God is heresy, and is from the evil one. Any time people try to exploit, or are greedy – we know this is not how God works. So with prophecy.

Don't Reject Prophecy though!

1 Thessalonians 5.19-22: Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

So, we must make sure that we don't disrespect prophecy all the time, or think that it is always wrong or 'airy fairy'. Instead, we must not put out the fire or work of the Spirit in someone's life, or in the life of a church. We shouldn't treat prophecies with contempt, but we should test them – hold onto good and avoid evil. A Godly man or woman, a person seeking God and his holiness, will have less chance to be fooled by false prophecy, and will recognise right prophecy.

It can be hard at times, though. If you've ever heard people have pictures in their mind, they can be from the imagination or a bit generic – "I see this church as a drop in a pool of water – the ripples are spreading out.." This kind of thing is great and helpful, but may not be that insightful. I also know someone who always has pictures. They can't all be right, and yet we must not disrespect the person, just as we wouldn't want to be disrespected.

Revelation 22.7 (words of Jesus): "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

However, as we learned above, we must be very wary of prophecy where it brings fear, uncertainty and confusion. I once had a 'prophet' from the States prophesy over me. It felt very uncomfortable. We had some good Bible teaching, then suddenly, as if someone had flicked on a light, he started shouting and running round the room 'prophesying'. The things he said over me weren't bad, in fact they were promises of spiritual giftings – such as healing, raising the dead etc! But it was very strange and very uncomfortable, causing great confusion and disturbance in my mind. Where prophecy is like this, it is highly unlikely to be from God. The Spirit is the friend, the counsellor. The Holy Spirit, the counsellor never causes chaos.

Prophecy and The Bible

Prophecy must line up with the Bible. Often, we will receive a word of prophecy that lines up with what God is saying and doing in our life at the time. I recently had 3 prophecies / words (when we did this talk as part of our church cluster group). One said that I was very faithful, like a metal tent peg sunk deep into the ground. Another said that I was like a colourful flag that brought people back to / pointed people to Jesus. Another told me not to set boundaries. All 3 were very accurate.

Prophecy today and one real-life example

When my sister was younger, she was going to go to school one day but didn't feel well. My mom thought God said, 'Don't send her to school today as she'll fall over at lunchtime and be hurt.' However, my mom sent my sister to school nevertheless. At lunch, she got a phone call from the school saying, "Your daughter's fallen over and chipped her tooth. We think she needs to go to the emergency dentist." Today, my sister's front teeth bear that scar of the chipped tooth. So listen carefully to what the Spirit says.

Practical Exercises

If you want to do a practical session or exercise on prophecy, try these 2 things:

First, get into small groups. Pray for each person and then ask God to give everyone in the group a prophecy, picture or word for that person. Bear in mind all that has been said above.

Secondly, count everyone in the room and write the numbers on individual pieces of equally sized paper. So, if there are 20 people, have 20 similar-sized pieces of paper, numbered 1-20. Then, go round the room with the pieces of paper folded in a hat, and get everyone to take out a number and look at it. Then, you get everyone to re-fold their paper and place it back into the hat. Shuffle the bits of paper in the hat then go back around the room and get people to take out another number. Make sure it's not their own number. Once that's done, everyone prays over that number / person and asks God for a word or prophecy etc. Once you've given a period of time (say up to 5mins), you ask people who feel comfortable enough, to share what they feel God has said. This works well because no-one knows the person they have prayed for!