

Overview of the Prophetic Ministry in the Church

I. THE GLOBAL OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY IN THE END-TIMES

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 21 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.' (Acts 2:14-21)

- A. All flesh – all men (not just prophets), women (not just men), children (not just adults or the mature) and all nations or on the Gentiles (not just on Jewish prophets and Israel)
- B. Signs in nature – in the heavens (sky, weather patterns) and on earth (earthquakes, etc.)
- C. Before the Day of the Lord (Second Coming) – Day of Pentecost was a down payment on this

II. WHAT IS PROPHECY?

- A. Prophecy is the testimony of Jesus' is the revelation of what is on heart for His people.
10 Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10)
- B. We make a clear distinction between the authority of Scripture and prophetic utterances with varying degrees of accuracy. Most prophecy is "human words reporting something that God brings to mind" (Wayne Grudem). The Spirit conveys to our mind thoughts we communicate in contemporary language. They are a mixture of God's words and man's words that combine divine inspiration and with the human process.
- C. Some prophetic words may be 10% God's words and 90% man's word while others have a greater revelatory content.
- D. It is possible to speak 100% accurate words from God, yet most often prophecy is a mixture. Sometimes this yields a "mature" word that reflects ideally what God would like to communicate and sometimes His word is communicated in a much less than ideal fashion, yielding a "weak" word of lesser value, but still not to be despised.
- E. We are called to the balance of "weighing what is said" as we test everything, yet holding fast to what is good without despising prophecy (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-21).

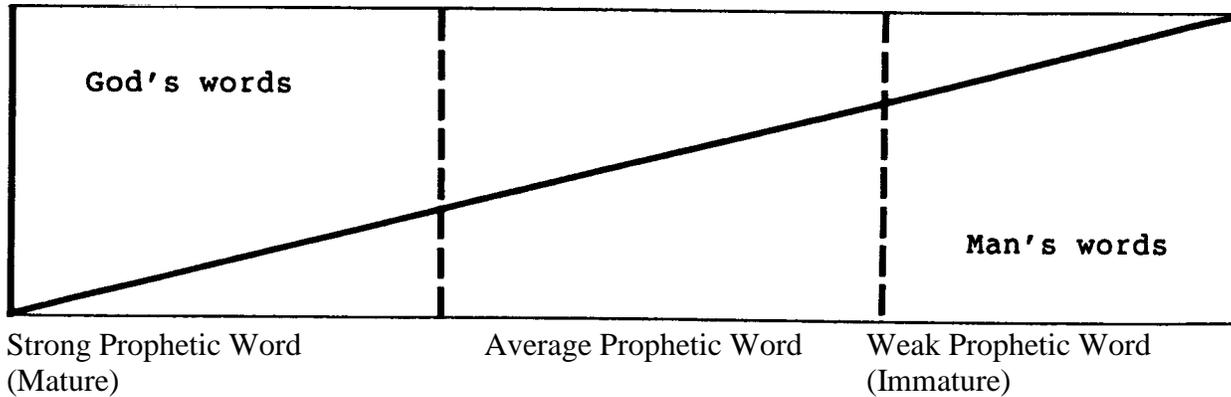
29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. (1 Cor. 14:29)

20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. (1 Thess. 5:20-21)

III. THREE LEVELS OF PROPHETIC MINISTRY.

- A. Simple Prophecy: any believer who speaks something God has brought to mind. We all are to earnestly seek to prophesy (1 Cor. 14:1, 39). All men and women, old and young alike are to speak forth words from God (Acts 2:17). Yet, "not all are prophets" (1 Cor. 12:29).
- ³ *He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. (1 Cor. 14:3)*
1. These are often simple impressions that God brings to mind. These include words of knowledge (i.e. specific information regarding the physical/ spiritual/emotional status of someone). Occasionally, this includes receiving "visions" (mental pictures) or dreams.
 2. They speak (mostly using their own words) an idea that God had brought to mind. These words are given in a small group setting or in the ministry line (not publicly on the mic).
- B. Office of the Prophet: believers whose ministry is like the prophets of the Old Testament. They give correction, direction and bring new emphases in the Church body. They minister in signs and wonders and regularly prophesy with great accuracy (Samuel, Elijah, etc.). They provide direction and correction to those in government in the church, marketplace or political arenas.
1. They predict future events with accuracy. They have a regular flow of divine revelation including open visions, prediction of natural events (i.e. weather patterns, political developments). Their words may be confirmed through natural signs (i.e. earthquakes, storms, droughts). Their words carry much authority as they speak with much greater accuracy. They minister frequently in sign gifts. They must have a proven ministry (that may take years). All who exercise prophetic authority must be under authority.
 2. Some have experiences which indicate that they have been sovereignly chosen by God (miraculous birth, angelic visitation, etc). The stature necessary for the office of prophet includes gifts (accurate revelation); fruit or mature character and wisdom (understanding of God's corporate purpose and ways)
- C. Prophetic gifting or ministry: believers whose gifting has been recognized for regular ministry in the local church. They will receive words and dreams on a regular basis and will have "open visions" on occasion (i.e., angelic visitations, audible voice). They will sometimes receive detailed information such as names, faces, dates, and future events. They occasionally operate in other sign gifts (healing, miracles, deliverance). They may in private expose unconfessed sin (2 Sam. 12:1-7). They give simple prophecies yet also give direction and correction.
- D. These people are "gifted" in that they receive an unusual amount of revelation, but are still being trained (have maturity of character and wisdom of God's corporate purposes). They are may receive words of correction and direction that they should write and submit to the leadership.

- E. The following chart will hopefully illustrate the relationship between these three levels of prophetic ministry and their ability to speak "the very words of God. This only provides some framework for understanding since there are no real clear cut standards for these levels.



IV. BENEFITS OF PROPHECY

- A. Before the leadership of the Church is willing to invest time, energy, and patience needed to effectively administrate prophecy, they must see its value the church.
1. Leadership issues – can be discerned ahead of time by prophetic words.
 2. Locations and timings of important expansions – buildings
 3. Warnings of satanic attack – foretelling of specific people's words and actions, circumstances, and knowledge of the nature and area of the attack has occurred repeatedly. ("To be forewarned is to be forearmed.")
 4. Sustaining hope – points out that we are strengthened by knowledge of God's will.

⁹ *We do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; (Col. 1:9)*

² *Attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding... (Col. 2:2)*

V. CHALLENGES OF PROPHECY: HAVING WRONG EQUATIONS

- A. False equation #1: Character equals anointing. The story of Balaam is an illustration of one with a prophetic anointing yet who led Israel into sin. King Saul prophesied by the Spirit, but ended his life tormented by an evil spirit. The church at Corinth is a picture of carnality and power.
- B. False equation #2: Anointing equals divine endorsement of ministry style
- C. False equation #3: Anointing equals 100 percent doctrinal accuracy

VI. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OT AND NT PROPHECY

- A. 100% accuracy – the OT ground rules for prophets was 100% accuracy and was required upon the penalty of death, the New Testament doesn't require the same standard of its prophets.
- B. Need to judge – instead of being stone as in the OT. The safeguard of NT prophecy is given in the mandate to judge each other's words (1 Cor. 14:29, 1 John 2:27; 1 Thes. 5:19-21).
²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. (1 Cor. 14:29)
- C. Few or many – in the OT there were only a few prophets for Israel and thus, the whole world. With the outpouring of the Spirit, the gift of prophecy was widely dispersed. The fate of the church would never depend on the accuracy of one prophet.
- D. Prophesying by faith – instead of direct revelation. We learn to prophesy according to the measure of our faith (Rom. 12:6), thus, we can mix up God's ideas with our words and thoughts.
- E. Authority to the nations leaders – instead of authority only to the Body of Christ in a region.

VII. THREE ASPECTS OF ADMINISTRATING PROPHETIC MINISTRY

- A. It is vital to distinguish between simple prophecy and revelational prophecy that has "authority." Every believer is able to prophesy on a simple level. However, to prophesy with authority, is much "weightier" and should not be done publicly without the confirmation of the leaders of the church, who are responsible before God to oversee the church's life.
³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and...be encouraged. (1 Cor. 14:31)
- B. Many prophetically anointed people have generated unnecessary strife because they have not understood how to administrate their prophetic revelation.
- C. There are 3 components of administrating prophecy: revelation, interpretation, and application. Do not be confident that you have administrated prophecy until all 3 components have been discerned with wisdom. The Lord often uses 3 different people to accomplish this.

VIII. REVELATION (RECEIVING PROPHETIC INFORMATION)

- A. The revelation is the divine information (the prophetic impression, dream, vision, etc.).
- B. Revelation about a situation or condition does not automatically come with the wisdom or power to bring a change in that situation. The release of God's power is often a separate operation of the Spirit. For instance, someone may prophetically discern an illness through a word of knowledge and yet not have the anointing to heal the sick person. Rather, it may simply supply the knowledge that God knows and cares about the condition, thus inspiring faith to receive.

IX. INTERPRETAION (UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHETIC INFORMATION)

- A. The interpretation of the revelation refers to understanding or gaining God's perspective on the revelatory information. Even with accurate revelation, it is easy to get a wrong interpretation of it. There are often symbolic and mysterious elements to visions, dreams, spoken words, etc. Revelation often comes in bits and pieces and thus, we need more understanding to proceed.

⁶ He (God) said, "Hear My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. ⁷ Not so with My servant Moses...⁸ I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings..."(Num. 12:6-8)

⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. (1 Cor. 13:9)

- B. It is important that we be cautious and not be overly confident and dogmatic in giving prophecy. Often we do not, and are not supposed to, understand the revelation until the circumstances unfold that actually brings its fulfillment.
- C. Some give in to the temptation to manufacture the interpretation before it is clear. This is a recipe for disaster. Ironically, some who are best at receiving a revelation seem worst at interpreting it.

X. APPLICATION (WHAT TO DO WITH THE PROPHETIC INFORMATION)

- A. The application refers to the wisdom of how to apply the information that we recently interpreted. I recommend asking the following questions. Who is supposed to hear it? Who is supposed to share it? Who do we tell? (leaders, certain individuals, intercessors, whole church). How much of it is to be shared, 30% or 100%? When should it be shared? Why? What is the desired impact? What mindsets do we want to see changed or what actions are to be taken?
- B. The main question is, "What will bring about the maximum amount of edification?"

XI. SUGGESTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATING PROPHECY

- A. We encourage people to have an attitude of "open expectancy" related to the fulfillment of a prophecy. The exact way that God brings about a word in our lives is normally quite different than we envision when we first receive it. We also encourage people to "hold," "sit on," or "shelve" revelations that do not have a clear interpretation. If they are shared, they should be communicated with the qualification that the interpretation is not yet clear.
- B. It is often wise to write them down and share them with pastoral leaders or those recognized as gifted at interpretation of obscure revelations, but generally they are not for public consumption.
- C. Don't be intimidated by someone's prophetic gifting out of a false humility.

- D. Deal humbly and frankly with people whose prophesying is not edifying others in either its content or their presentation. Give them specific boundaries which you believe are appropriate for where they are in their prophetic "measure" of maturity.
- E. Appeal to those who operate in the prophetic to be more "normal" and not to take themselves too seriously. Encourage them to be open to adjustment as they offer their words in a humble style (less melodrama and more common language). The Lord doesn't need hype to perform His word. It's better to be less "heroic" in our prophesying and more helpful.
- F. Have the integrity and humility to "mop up" any messes that are caused by wrong prophecies or their poor administration. This is the only way to ensure that your congregation's "corporate conscience" stays clear and good regarding the gift of prophecy.
- G. Communicate on paper (so new comers are informed) of your convictions concerning the guidelines and ground rules governing the giving and receiving of prophecy in your fellowship.

XII. NUTURING THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

- A. Prophetic ministry is inevitable (Acts 2:17-21), the End-Time Church is a prophetic Church.
- B. Give mercy to those with a teachable spirit and avoid giving unsanctified mercy to the stubborn. Create a safe atmosphere so they can grow in their confidence (small group settings).
- C. Accept the reality of the "God orchestrated stigma" for moving in the Spirit.
⁹ For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake...we are weak...we are dishonored!...12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure... (1 Cor. 4:9-12)
⁷ Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
- D. Allow for the risk and accept the inevitable of being humbled as a congregation as you pursue more growth in the prophetic. The very oxen that bring strength to the farm also bring a mess to the stable. Some prefer ministries to have clean stables even if it means losing the strength that the prophetic ministry brings.
⁴ Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox. (Proverbs 14:4)