



Is it God?

Weighing Prophecy

David Mansell



When we prophesy, we 'speak to men from God for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.' It is the certainty that it is God who has spoken that makes prophecy the most effective of all the gifts of the Spirit in building the church. Paul gave great weight to prophecy. So much so, that when he wrote to instruct Timothy, he based what he had to say on the prophecies previously made over him. 'I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight...'²

If on the other hand, we say, 'thus says the Lord...!', when God has not spoken, people's hopes are in vain. Such was the case in the time of Jeremiah, who had to warn the people of false prophets who prophesied, 'peace, peace', when there was no peace,³ lulling them into a false sense of security in the externals of the temple and its service so they were unprepared for God's judgement when it came.

Why Do We Need To Weigh Prophecy?

Because God tells us to. 'Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully.'⁴ 'Weighing' means we assess whether what has been said carries the distinctive mark of true prophecy or not, and if it

does, we then heed the word and take appropriate action.

If we fail to weigh and act on prophecy as a church, then the gift will either soon be despised as it was in Thessalonica: 'Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good',⁵ or else people will swallow the bad with the good with consequent damage to their faith as was the case with Hymenaeus and Philetus who proclaimed that the resurrection was past and destroyed the faith of some.⁶

Who Weighs Prophecy?

In order to weigh prophecy, it is vital that it is given in a setting where it can be properly weighed. That is, in the church, where there are prophets and elders who are competent both to assess what is said and ready to take responsibility for their judgement. There seems to be a growing tendency in some places to encourage people to 'get a word' for one another in the context of just two or

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three people, or even get a prophecy to give to oneself. If this is simply encouragement from the word of God, that's no problem, but if it's directive prophecy it is out of order, as such prophecy requires 'two or three' to confirm the word, plus 'others' (plural) to 'weigh carefully.'⁷

I have met a number of people who have been bound up by unjudged and false prophecy. There was a young couple who got engaged as a result of a prophecy that they should marry, but didn't love each other. Then there was Jane, desperately trying to come to terms with a prophecy that she should not marry but give herself to a life of prayer. Fortunately we were able to say to both that it was not the Lord speaking - with signs following.

What Is Weighing Prophecy?

- We confirm its source: is it God, man or another spirit?
- We confirm its weight: is it empty and to be discarded, is it helpful and encouraging, is it a vital key we must take hold of, or a critical command we must obey?
- Weighing goes beyond affirming the source of the prophecy, it also ensures that we respond to what God has said. That is, spell out exactly what God wants us to do, act on the word and follow it through. We cannot permit the situation where today's prophecy evaporates with the final 'amen' at the end of the meeting. The key to continual release of the prophetic gift is the weighing and following through of what God has already said.
- A prophecy must not only be weighed in the meeting where it is given but also in the fruit it bears. We must not move the goal posts to help the fulfilment. If someone prophesies that somebody will be healed and there is no healing, we can't say 'it happened spiritually'.
- If we act on God's word and we see fruit, the word should be re-confirmed and given more weight and greater priority in what we do.
- If a prophecy proves to be false, we need to say so to the church and admit the mistake. This will produce faith that we're serious about prophecy.

How Can We Tell The Source?

- If it is from God then the prophecy will stir other prophets and spiritual men and women;⁸ it will honour Jesus and draw all to him;⁹ it will be rooted in existing scriptural principles and will never contradict any scripture;¹⁰ it will not bring disorder but peace;¹¹ the person bringing the word will be in control of his or her own spirit and not a passive channel.¹²
- If it is merely the words of man, then: it will be empty words, a resounding gong, a clanging cymbal,¹³ leaving no deposit of Christ; it will manifest personal striving, another ride on a personal hobby horse, words that express reaction not revelation. It may contain meaningless 'prophetic' style jargon: 'Yea verily' or a change from normal English to 'Thees and thous' and all in mystical pictures that need another prophecy to explain them. Or yet another 'vision' of a river without saying clearly what it represents; or promises that 'God will do great things,' without telling us what these 'great things' are so we can take action to see them fulfilled. Prophecy is not just predicting the future, but telling us how to realise our promised destiny.

- If it is from another spirit: it will jar on the spirit of those who are spiritual;¹⁴ It will fail to honour Jesus and will often undermine either his humanity or deity;¹⁵ it will also often claim new, superior, special or exclusive revelation and thus not be willing to be tested by the scriptures; its aim will be to be divisive and draw to itself rather than to Jesus.

What Tests Should We Apply To Prophecy?

- Is it in accordance with scripture?
- Is it in harmony with what we know of God and his ways?
- Is it leading us to Jesus or drawing disciples after itself?
- Is it creating faith and bringing clarity, or causing confusion?
- Is it showing us the path or just another picture?
- Does the word have prophetic quality? That is:
BURDEN - the heart of God laid bare;
REVELATION - making things clear, showing the way;
ANOINTING - is the one who prophesies affected by what he says he's seeing, as Stephen was when he saw heaven opened? Are the words clear, fitting, beautiful, sharp, memorable, creating faith, drawing us to Jesus?

What If The Prophecy Is Genuine, But Is Delivered With Lack Of Confidence?

Then publicly confirm that the word is from God. Pick out the main points and briefly underline them. You could ask the person to prophesy again, with the assurance that he's heard from God and that the church will say 'amen.'

The result can be dramatic. On several occasions God has told me to do this, not just one repeat, but sometimes three or even four! Each time the person rose to a higher level of faith in their word, and the church rose to a higher level of faith in response. The result? A word of real weight.

Having read these things don't be over cautious. May God help you as a leader to develop the prophetic potential of your own people. •

1. 1 Corinthians 14:3
2. 1 Timothy 1:18
3. Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11
4. 1 Corinthians 14:29
5. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21
6. 2 Timothy 2:17-18
7. 1 Corinthians 14:29
8. 1 Corinthians 14:31
9. Revelation 19:10

10. 1 Corinthians 14:37
11. 1 Corinthians 14:33
12. 1 Corinthians 14:32
13. 1 Corinthians 13:1
14. 1 Corinthians 2:15
15. 1 John 4:1-3
16. Matthew 7:15, 1
Corinthians 14:37, 2
Corinthians 11:3-4

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