

Prophecy Policy
Of Taupo Baptist Church
Taupo, New Zealand

Prophecy in the New Testament

The gift of prophecy and the lessons that can be learnt about prophecy do flow from the Old Testament to the New. However the role of the prophet does not necessarily flow through. In the Old Testament, the prophet played a key national role in calling the Israelites to obedience to the Law, in particular in regards to rejection of idolatry and God's concern for the poor. In the New Testament, the word "prophet" seems to indicate a person who regularly uses the gift of prophecy. Some people today use the word "prophetic" as a label for say a key speech to Rotary about social action, or something cutting edge. While not dismissing such a notion, the comments below predominately assume a Spirit-inspired message in a corporate setting with other believers.

What is Prophecy?

- Prophecy is a spiritual gift, listed among many gifts, of which all Christians have at least one. 1 Corinthians 12:7-10. It is a message for believers inspired by God for a particular people at a particular time.

Value of Prophecy

- The Gift of Prophecy is valued highly as of benefit to the whole church. 1 Corinthians 14:1, 5 Prophecy should not be scoffed at, but seriously considered. 1 Thessalonians 5:19

Nature of the Prophecy

- True prophecy is constructive and never judgemental even though it might contain rebukes or correction. It builds faith (Ephesians 4:12-16, 1 Corinthians 14:2-4). True prophecy works in anticipation of events. A word of judgement or blessing is usually conditional on repentance and obedience (Jeremiah 18:7-10). It takes seriously where God's people have failed and need instruction (Jeremiah 28:8-9) rather than

what people want to hear. While rare in the New Testament, it can have a predictive element (Acts 11:28).

Manner brought

- Prophecy is given under the control of the person bringing it, and should be limited to 2-3 per meeting, and given in an orderly way. 1 Corinthians 14:29, 32
- Prophecy should always be brought with love - 1 Corinthians 13:2 - and is useless unless it is.

Testing of Prophecy

- Prophecy should be tested - possibly by others with the Gift of Prophecy - and not accepted at face value. 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 1 John 4:1, 1 Corinthians 14:29.
- Prophecy will never contradict the teaching of Scripture. 1 Timothy 3:16-17
- A congregation will know by the witness of the Holy Spirit what the voice of their Shepherd is. John 10:4-5, Jeremiah 31:31, 1 John 2:20.
- Old Testament prophets used the language and symbolism of their day, and we should expect authentic prophecy today to be the same.

Character of the person bringing Prophecy

- Jesus clearly warned that false prophets will deceive many and might do miraculous signs. Matthew 7:15, 24:11, 24.
- The character of the person's life-bringing prophecy is a key way of revealing false prophets. Miracles do not authenticate the prophetic. Matthew 7: 15-21
- A correct doctrine of Jesus Christ and public acknowledgement of His as a person's Lord and Saviour is another key test for revealing the false prophet. 1 John 4:1-4.
- The lessons from the Old Testament indicate that we should be very wary of those who exhibit pride, seek approval, or want to take centre stage (see below).

- **The character of a Prophet (Old Testament lessons)**

The example of the Old Testament prophets is that they did not welcome their call, but accepted it, and realized that the calling was going to be difficult. There would be no personal gain, only criticism and suffering. However they felt a responsibility to their calling. The words they were given came with a deep compassion for their people. The focus was not on the prophets themselves, who always took a back seat. They were men of deep prayer, and a profound awareness of the character and presence of God.

However there were also many false prophets in the Old Testament, often servants of the State. They had high status and their vested interest prevented them from opposing the King in the name of Yahweh (Amos 7:10-13) as they were meant to do. This promoted considerable pride, self-interest and dishonesty (Jeremiah 6:13-15, 8:10-12). Rather than listening to the Word of God they resorted to dreams, divinations, astrology etc. (Jeremiah 14:11-17, 8:1-3, Ezekiel 13:2, Deuteronomy 18:10-12) and lies (Jeremiah 5:12-13). Their priority was to gain approval and personal gain (Ezekiel 13:19) and so told the people what they wanted to hear, “and the people loved it that way” Jeremiah 5:30-31. False prophets “whitewashed” (covered over) the evil deeds of the people (Ezekiel 22:28) and built up false hope (Ezekiel 13:10) by prophesying peace (Jeremiah 5:12-13). They had little knowledge of God’s will.

Policy Amended

- We affirm the Gift of Prophecy as one of the gifts of the Spirit, relevant and vital for the church today.
- Prophecies may be given in open prayer times. If there is not a space, an Elder or the person directing the service can be approached to ask if the prophecy may be given. This might happen on the day or at a later date. Alternatively prophecies can be given in writing for consideration, and then given publicly at a later date if appropriate.
- Prophecies are to be given in an appropriate manner (see above) and the Elders retain the right to ask someone not to bring prophecy.

- Prophecies that have a corrective element or are of significance to the whole church are to be brought to the Elders for testing prior to being given in a public service.
- Once given, prophecies will be recorded, and prayerfully considered by the Elders and others as appropriate.