

Continuity

Of all the gifts and ministries in the the Bible, the prophetic gift is the most obviously continuous between Old and New Testaments.

Old Testament Prophets

Prophets

- Noah, Moses, Miriam, Deborah, Samuel, David, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha

Written Prophets

- Major: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

The task of the Old Testament Prophet

"See today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." (Jer 1:10)

Exposing sin

- Taking the lid off a situation like lifting a stone!
- Individuals, Kings, Cities, Nations
- eg David and Nathan
- Amos (2:6-8) exposes social injustice, greed, materialism, false religion

Warning of Judgement

- Watchman Ezek 33:1-6
- Jonah in Nineveh
- Amos 3:11-15

A call to Repentance and Righteous living

- Ezek 33:11 - Turn, turn from your evil ways
- Amos 5:4-6, 14-15

A promise of Restoration

- To those who repent
- Jeremiah 31:18-21
- The love of of God Conveyed by the prophet - the Character of God
- Amos 9:11-15

Revelation of the Mind of God (Forttelling)

- Moses a prophet who heard the voice of God and who received the Laws and oracles of God
- Knowing the mind of God - interprets and expounds and communicates

Describing the future (Foretelling)

- Many things covered - see later
- Downfall of nations,
- God's judgements, blessings and promises
- Purposes for Israel and the coming Messiah

Encouragement and Hope for the future

- eg Haggai & Zechariah encourage Zerubbabel to build the temple after the exile (Ezra 5:1-2)

Advising those in Government

- Joseph - Pharaoh
- Samuel - Saul
- Machaiah - Ahab
- Isaiah - Hezekiah
- Jeremiah - Zedekiah
- Jonah - King of Nineveh
- Hanani - Asa
- Kings have administrative skills and earthly perspective - prophet brings a spiritual perspective

Leadership of God's People

- Moses, Samuel, David

Interpreting Dreams

- Joseph, Daniel

Confronting others Fearlessly

- Confronting Kings, priests, other prophets
- Elijah, Jeremiah

Interceding for the people and individuals

- Standing in the gap - pleading with God on behalf of the people
- Moses - Ex 32:11-14, 30-34, Num 14:10-20, Deut 9:25-29
- Samuel - 1 Sam 7:2-11
- Jeremiah - Jer 14:19-15:1
- Man of God - 1 Kings 13:6
- Amos - Amos 7:1-6

Working Miracles

- Mainly around Moses and Elijah/Elisha (40 days fast, revelation of God, with Jesus at transfiguration)

Anointing Leaders

- Samuel anoints David, Elisha anoints Hazael and Jehu

The Character of the Old Testament Prophet

Call of the Prophet

- Moses - Ex 3:1-4:17
- Isaiah - Is 6
- Jeremiah - Jer 1:4-19
- Ezekiel - Ezek 1-3
- Hosea - Hos 1:2
- Amos - Amos 7:14-15
- Jonah - Jon 1:1
- Samuel - 1 Sam 3
- Call by God - not self appointed or called by men
- Not hereditary unlike Kings and priests in OT
- Unique call of an individual for a task
- Priests were guardians of the written deposited revelation, the prophets the bearers of progressive revelation.

Prayer of the Prophet

- Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the

prophets. -- Amos 3:7 _

- Those who stand in the counsel of God 1 Kings 22:19, Jer 23:22, Amos 3:7, Is 6

Lifestyle of the Prophet

- Devotion to the task
- Give up comforts of the world
- Often travelling ministry
- Some married.

Conviction of the Prophet

- Men of great conviction and strength of feeling for their message
- Some with great strength declare the judgements of God - eg Isaiah and Amos
- Jeremiah expresses great sorrow at the plight of his people.

Godly life of the Prophet

- By their fruits you will know them

The Methods of the Old Testament Prophet

Listening to God

- “The word of the Lord came to...”
- A strong conviction of the Holy Spirit - God enhances the natural thinking processes, dreams enhanced by God
- Perception by the inward sense - visions and pictures eg Ezekiel
- Perception by the outward sense - Moses sees a burning bush, Samuel hears a voice, angelic appearances

Transmitting the Message

- “thus says the Lord...” - being God’s mouthpiece
- Spoken Oracle
- Written record
- Pictures, Visions and Dreams - Ezekiel, Zechariah
- Parable Allegory and Illustration from daily life
 - Is 5:1-7 The Vineyard
 - 2 Sam 12:1-7 Nathan to David
 - Ez 16 unfaithful wife
 - Ez 23 adulterous sisters
- Music (Miriam, Hannah,) and Poetry (Habbakuk, David)
- Acted Oracle
 - 2 Kings 13:14 Arrow of the Lord’s victory against Syria (exact relation between symbol and word)
 - Is 20 Isaiah walks naked and barefoot
 - Jer 19 Jeremiah smashed a potters vessel
 - 1 Kings 11:29 Ahijah tears his coat into 12 pieces
 - Ez 4:1-3 Ezekiel besieges a model city
 - Ez 12:1ff Ezekiel digs through the wall of his house and goes through with pack on back
 - Ez 24:15 Ezekiel did not mourn for his dead wife

God and Man in prophecy

Human personality used by God

- There is a human element. Not like a tube or a telephone. The prophet is more like a musical instrument which God can play. Different instruments sound different but play the same tune. % Human, divine

God uses the experience of the prophet

- Amos the shepherd uses illustrations from the land
- Daniel the politician prophecies about nations, kingdoms and empires
- Ezekiel the priest prophecies about the temple

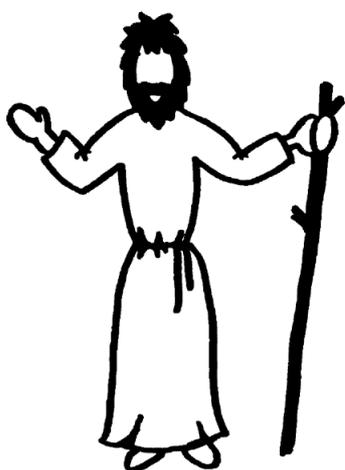
The Holy Spirit

- Relevant in OT prophecy
- Spiritual gifts - Num 11:29, 1 Sam 10:6,10, 19:20,23
- Inspiration - 1 Kings 22:24, Joel 2:28-29, Hos 9:7, Neh 9:30, Zec 7:12, Mic 3:8
- Other - 1 Chron 12:18, 2 Chron 15:1, 20:14, 24:20, Neh 9:20, Ez 11:5

Scope of the Old Testament Prophet

The Law of Prophetic Perspective

Prophetic statements not in chronological order. Often events widely distributed in time are next to each other in a prophecy. Like mountain peaks, a view through binoculars, a collage.



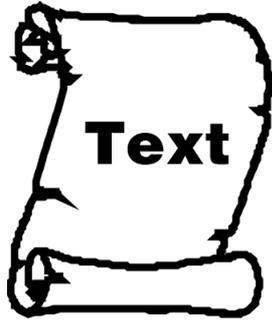
----- **End Time**
----- **Messiah**
----- **Future of Israel**
- **Current events**

Examples

- Return of Judah from Babylon and gathering together of Israel in the end time Is 27:12-13, 43:5-7, 49:8-12
- Coming of Christ (first time) in lowliness, appearance in glory Is 61:1-3, Mal 3:1-4, Is 9:6-7
- End time, new heavens and new earth - this theme is expanded in Revelation but even then there is some compression left! Is 65:17ff, 66:22ff
- Prophets did not always understand the significance of the prophecies - where the spirit of Christ was pointing 1 Peter 1:10-12 cf Dan 12:8, Zech 4:5, incomplete understanding of revelation.
- Luke 24:25-27 sufferings of and glory of Christ are the main subject of prophecy
- Before the eyes of the eternal God, everything is present, he stands outside of time cf Is 53 past, present, future

The Law of Double Reference

The same passage can actually apply to two (or more) events widely distant in time eg a coming king of Israel in the near future and the Messiah at the end time. There is often a “type” (or types) and an ultimate fulfilment. The type is the historical figure, object, event in the relatively near future which points to the fulfilment in the more distant future.



Text - - - - - Type - - - - - Fulfilment

Examples

- Is 7:1-17, 8:5-8, 9:2-7, 11:1-10 This is a specific sign for Ahaz concerning Aram and Israel but it also expands into a sign regarding the future King on the throne of David - the Messiah
- Antiochus Epiphanes described in the book of Daniel (11:31) is a type of the actual antichrist in the last days
- Kings of Tyre (Ez 28:12-19) and Babylon (Is14:12-15) may be types of Satan

Major Subjects and Time Scale of Prophetic Writing:

- Lifetime of the Prophet
- Israel's captivity and exile
- Destruction of Israel's enemies
- The destiny of the nations
- Restoration of Israel (first)
- First advent of Christ
- The church age
- End-time restoration of Israel
- Second Coming of Christ
- The Judgements of God
- Eternity, New Heaven and New Earth

New Testament Prophets and Prophecy

Prophets

Zachariah, Simeon, Anna, John the Baptist

Jesus, Agabus, Silas, John, Philip's daughters (Acts 21:9)

Jesus was the Prophet (Deut 18:15)

Deut 18:15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. 16 For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."

17 The Lord said to me: "What they say is good. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. 19 I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name."

- John 1:21,25 6:14, 7:24, Acts 3:22, 7:37,52
- A prophet was expected to have supernatural knowledge
- If this man were a prophet, he would know.....(Luke 7:39)
- Sir I perceive that you are a prophet (John 4:19)
- If you are Christ, prophecy, who struck you (Matt 26:68)
- They recognised the profound teaching of Jesus as prophetic

- They recognised his actions as prophetic
- They recognised his miracles as a sign of a prophet

Prophets in the New Testament Church

- Jesus said he would send prophets, wise men and teachers who would be persecuted (Matt 23:24) and he urged those he addressed to receive prophets (Matt 10:41).
- We find prophets in the early church:
 - A group of prophets from Antioch visit Jerusalem (Acts 11:27)
 - Acting out oracles and foretelling - Agabus (Acts 11:27, 21:10-11)
 - With teachers worshipping, fasting and praying waiting on God before a missionary enterprise at Antioch. Sending out missionaries (Acts 13:1-3)
 - Among the leaders at the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22,32)
 - Men who risked their lives for the name of Jesus (Acts 15:26)
 - Acting as a mouthpiece for the apostles (Acts 15:27)
 - Encouraging and strengthening the brother (Acts 15:32)
 - Accompanying and encouraging Paul on his missionary journey - apostles and prophets a powerful combination (Silas)
 - Helping Paul and Peter to write letters (Silas = Silvanus)
 - Writing messages to churches (John)
 - Writing apocalyptic material (John)

The Prophet in the church

- In the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles..... (1 Cor 12:28)
- Two or three prophets should speak and the others should weigh carefully what is said (1 Cor 14:29)
- The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. (1 Cor 14:32-33)
- Prophet should acknowledge authority in the church (1 Cor 14:37)
- Apostles and prophets involved in church foundation (Eph 2:20)
- Mystery of Christ revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets (Eph 3:5)
- It was he (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.....to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ

Gift of Prophecy

Prophecy - a Gift for Some

- If a man's gifting is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith (Rom 12:6)
- To another prophecy (1 Cor 12:10).
- Are all prophets? (1 Cor 12:29)

Prophecy - a Gift for Everyone

- Sons and daughters, men and women (Acts 2:17-18, 1 Cor 11:4)
- Linked with receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17, 19:6)
- For you can all prophecy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged (1 Cor 14:31)

About Prophecy in the Church

- No good without love (1 Cor 13:2)
- Prophecies will cease (1 Cor 13:8)
- We prophesy in part (1 Cor 13:9)
- Eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy (1 Cor 14:1,39)
- Prophecy speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort (1 Cor

14:3)

- Prophecy edifies the church (1 Cor 14:4)
- Prophecy is superior to tongues unless they are interpreted (1 Cor 14:5)
- Prophecy is for believers (1 Cor 14:22)
- An unbeliever can be convinced that he is a sinner by prophecy, the secrets of his heart can be laid bare and he will fall down and worship God (1 Cor 14:24-25)
- 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. (1 Thess 5:19-22)
- Paul instructs Timothy in keeping with prophecies made about him (1 Tim 1:18)
- Following through prophetic words will enable us to fight the good fight (1 Tim 1:18)
- Gifts were imparted to Timothy by a prophetic message which was given as the elders laid hands on him (1 Tim 4:14)

Comment

As Christians we should all desire to prophesy and as we are living close to God will do so from time to time. There are some who will be specially gifted in this area and who will bring more frequent prophetic words of encouragement. The prophet is one who will bring substantial words from God for individuals and for the church.

False Prophets and Prophecies

Warnings

- There are numerous warnings in the bible about false prophets:
- At the end of the age many false prophets will appear, they will deceive and perform miracles (Matt 24:10,24, Mark 13:22)
- False prophets are spoken well of and treated well by the ungodly (Luke 6:26)
- We are to watch out for them (Matt 7:15)
- They come in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15)
- Inwardly they are ferocious wolves (Matt 7:15)
- They are recognised by their fruit (Matt 7:16)
- Prophecy and miracles in the name of Jesus does not mean that they belong to him (Matt 7:21-23)

Old Testament Examples

Zedekiah son of Kenaanah (1 Kings 22)

- False prophecy of success in battle to Ahab and Jehoshaphat.
- Contesting the true prophecy of Micaiah.
- Influenced by a lying spirit.

Hananiah (Jer 28)

- False message of deliverance from Bablyon.
- Attempt to negate the prophetic word of the true prophet Jeremiah by breaking the wooden yoke.
- God's judgement - death

New Testament Examples

Bar-Jesus or Elymas (Acts 13:6-12)

- A Jewish sorcerer.
- Opposed the preaching of the gospel.
- A child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right.
- Full of all kinds of deceit and trickery.
- Perverting the way of the Lord.

- God's judgement - he became blind for a time.

Jezebel of Thyatira (Rev 2:20-24)

- False prophetess teaching and leading people into immorality.
- Teaching so called deep secrets from Satan.
- God's judgement - suffering and death of children.

End-time False Prophet (Rev 13:11-17, 16:3, 19:20, 20:10)

- Miraculous ability.
- Promotes worship of the anti-Christ.
- Significant leader in the world.
- God's judgement - lake of fire.

Tests for False Prophets

Character Test

- Immorality and false religion (Jer 23:9-15)
- By their fruits you will know them (Matt, 1 Cor 13)
- Men-pleasing to retain status, livelihood and life (Micah 3:5-8, Ezek 22:27-28, Luke 6:26)

Method Test

- Divination, charms, superstitions etc. are sure signs of false prophets. (Ezek 13:17-23)

Call and Anointing Test

- The prophets are prophesying lies in my name - I have not sent them, appointed them or spoken to them. They prophesy false visions, divinations, idolatries and delusions of their own minds. (Jer 14:14-17, 23:16)
- Stealing words, wag their own tongues, false dreams. (Jer 13:25-32)
- But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or hear his word. (Jer 13:18,22)

Theological test - Message in line with Scripture and the truth of the Gospel?

- Beware of prophet who accurately foretells the future and works miracles but who preaches another gospel. (Deut 13)
- "Jesus is Lord". (1 Cor 12:3)
- "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh". (1 John 4:1-3)
- "The testimony of Jesus" is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev 19:10)

Prediction Test

- If what is predicted prophecy does not come to pass then it was a false prophecy. (Deut 18:21-22) Of course sometimes response to the prophecy will advert God's judgement as with Jonah when he prophesied (truly) over Nineveh.
- Notice that the converse is not true. If something does come to pass which is prophesied, it does not prove that the prophet is true! False prophets are quite good at prediction!

False Consolation Test - Peace when there is no peace

- One of the major symptoms of false prophets in the Old Testament was bringing messages of comfort, consolation and peace when a warning and call to repentance was required. (Jer 14:15, 23:17, Micah 3:5-8, Ezek 13:10, 22:28 etc.)

Pastoral Interaction with Prophecy

Elders and other leaders need to be able to allow freedom for prophecy, be able to weigh prophecy and apply prophecy.

Freedom for Prophecy

- Make available time for prophecy
- Use of microphone - or not?
- Discussion with meeting leader before bringing significant word
- Intercepting or interrupting if there are problems
- Asking for clarification

Judgement of Prophecy (Weighing)

(a) Who Judges?

- By individuals as appropriate - personal prophecies
- By the meeting leader if relevant to the meeting
- By elders if applicable to the church as a whole
- By other prophets in certain circumstances

(b) Who is it for?

- An individual
- Several individuals
- Everybody on an individual basis
- Everybody on a corporate basis
- This church
- The leaders
- The wider church

(c) Is it from God?

- Possible sources: God, Man, Satan.
- % God and man.

(d) Some Principles of Judgement

- What is the witness of the Spirit, what is my initial feeling about this word?
- How does it square up with scripture?
- Is the content prophetic?
- Does it make sense in this context, with these people?
- Does it tie up with other prophetic words?
- What about the person who brought the word - character?
- Is it too personal?
- Is it edifying?
- Is it criticism?
- Does it sound weird?

Response and Application

(a) Positive response

- Individual active, visible, immediate response.
- Individual silent response.
- Individual long-term response.
- Corporate active, visible, specific, immediate response.
- Corporate long-term response.
- Record in writing or on media?

(b) No Response

- The word demanded no response.
- The word was of little consequence and perhaps mainly from man. Possible a comforting word. There is no need to make comment in the meeting but encouragement and correction if required could be given privately afterwards. Every attempt should be made to encourage the use and development of spiritual gifts and we do that by being bold and

occasionally making mistakes.

(c) Negative Response

- This is a last resort if one feels that the contribution is harmful to individuals or to the church.
 - The word is prevented or interrupted.
 - A public statement is made to be cautious and to ignore the word or parts of the word.
 - The person giving the word is talked with and advised at the end of the meeting.
-

Other Revelation Gifts

These gifts are other revelational gifts and may be part of prophecy and commonly exercised by prophets.

(a) Message of Wisdom (1 Cor 12:8)

- This gift is not described in detail but presumably it is supernatural wisdom applied to individual or church situations. One would expect this supernatural wisdom to transcend the usual wisdom the individual.

(b) Message of Knowledge (1 Cor 12:8)

- Again this gift is not described in detail but presumably it is supernatural knowledge regarding individual or church situations. This is an information gift. There are many examples of this gift in the Bible.

(c) Interpretation of Tongues (1 Cor 12-14)

- This raises the value of tongues to that of prophecy but does not necessarily convert it into prophecy. Given that when one speaks in a tongue one speaks not to men but to God (1 Cor 14:2), one might expect an interpretation to reflect this direction - a Spirit given statement of worship or intercession (Rom 8:26-27). 1 Cor 14:21 suggests that a tongue can also be directed from God to man.
 - When someone utters a tongue clearly and loudly in public, we should wait for the interpretation. If no-one else interprets, the one who utters the tongue should seek to do so (1 Cor 14:13) failing that the leader should seek to interpret or move the meeting on with the least amount of tension or fuss!
-