

Prophets

by Anton Bosch

Anton Bosch's sermon on prophets emphasizes the significant differences between Old Testament and New Testament prophets, urging the church to discern and judge prophetic messages today.

Duration: 45:56

Scripture: Acts 21:10, Ephesians 4:7-11, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20

Topics: "Prophets"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the difference between the gift of prophecy and the ministry of a prophet. He emphasizes that not everyone who prophesies is a prophet, as there are specific qualifications for the prophetic ministry. The speaker also mentions the importance of recognizing the distinction between those who prophesy occasionally and those who hold the office of a prophet. The sermon references Acts 21:10, which introduces the prophet Agabus, and Ephesians 4:11, which mentions the ministry of prophets in the church.

Transcript

Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4, and we continue the series on the church, and I want to speak with you this evening about prophets. Ephesians chapter 4, and let's read from verse 7, Ephesians 4 from verse 7. And you need to pay particular attention because the same as with apostles, the differences between what is popularly taught today and what is the true teaching of the Word of God is the differences are subtle, the differences are very small, and yet they are major. And so it's very easy just to, if you don't pay attention, to say, oh, well, that's what everybody else is teaching, when in fact what you'll hear this evening, and I say this with humility, you will not hear this anywhere else.

I have not found, I've searched every book on the subject, and I have not found this teaching, and yet it is from the scriptures, and I will give you the scriptures for it. So let's read from Ephesians chapter 4, verse 7. But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, he says, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.

Now this he ascended, what does it mean but that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. Verse 11. And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a

perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

That we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him who is the head Christ, from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effect of working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Now one of the problems we have is that there has been a lot of emphasis on prophets in the last 30 years. And we live in this time when they speak about the re-establishment of these ministries, particularly the apostolic and the prophetic ministry.

And so all of the stuff that you get from the big churches and the big conferences and stuff that they have going on all the time, there's this great emphasis on the apostles and the prophets. And what they're really saying is that there were prophets in the New Testament here, and then there were no prophets for a long time, 2,000 years. And now in the end of the time, as part of the latter rain teaching, there is a new resurgence and a re-establishment of the ministry of apostles and prophets.

Now that is clearly not true. As we said last time we spoke about apostles, the apostles didn't disappear in the last 2,000 years. There have been apostles in the last 2,000 years.

The only difference is that they've been mainly called apostles. But it's the same thing. And the same with prophets.

Prophets have not disappeared. They have always been there. The other problem we have is that the idea that we have of prophets today is that these are really Christian fortune tellers.

They come and they tell you your fortune, what's going to happen? You're going to get old and die. But besides that, you need to you need to give me your Mercedes-Benz and that sort of stuff. And of course, the prophecy which is confirmed many, many times over is that God has a great plan for your life.

And God has a great plan for this church. And this church is going to grow. And many, many people are going to come in.

You hear that prophecy over and over and over and over. All right, let's look at the ministry of prophets. Now, remember the New Testament only begins at the cross.

The ministries only begin when Jesus ascended. It's very specific here in Ephesians chapter 4 that when he ascended on high, he gave gifts to men. So whatever ministries existed before that are not part of this, what is also popularly called now the fivefold ministry.

And I don't like that idea because there are other ministries other than these five also. But that these five were given only when he ascended. So if there were prophets and there were prophets that operated before then, they were not part of this.

The same way as there were apostles, there were the 12, but they were before Jesus ascended on high. And so they were different apostles to the ones that were given when he ascended on high. So clearly this is different.

And you remember the two greatest prophets that operated before he ascended were who? John the Baptist and the most obvious one, Jesus. Jesus. Remember Moses prophesied, well there was

prophesied that a greater prophet than Moses would come.

And obviously that is Jesus. Jesus fulfilled all of the ministries. He was an apostle, a prophet, evangelist, a pastor, and a teacher.

He was all of those things. And so, but we cannot look at Jesus to understand how a prophet operates because he is partially, because he is part of the Old Testament in that sense. He's that bridge, but also because he has all the ministries.

And so it's very difficult to separate and say, you know, this is his prophetic ministry or his apostolic ministry or his teaching ministry. It's very difficult to look at Jesus and understand how these ministries ought to operate. And of course, John the Baptist was an Old Testament prophet.

He was the last, and Jesus is very clear and specific that he was the last of the Old Testament prophets. And so the New Testament prophets, there are really only three that are mentioned in the scriptures, but they get quite a bit of prominence. And so we can get a lot of good understanding as to how these men ought to operate.

And of course there was Agabus, who's the one that we know about most. And then there was Judas and there was Silas. Now, before we begin to speak about that, I think that we need to just understand the differences between Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets.

There are huge differences between these two ministries. Unfortunately, much of the idea that people have about prophets today is based on what an Old Testament prophet is and how an Old Testament prophet operates. But in fact, there is almost no similarities between the two.

The Old Testament prophets, let me first deal with this issue of foretelling or telling the future. One of the mistaken ideas is that is borrowed from the Old Testament. And so a mistake is made when it's taken from the Old Testament and then it is mistakenly applied.

So you have a double mistake when it's applied to the New Testament. And that is that what Old Testament prophets did is they foretold the future. That was a very small part of what they did.

Most of the prophets in the Old Testament had nothing to do with telling what the future had. Their function was to call people back to the word, back to the law, and back to God. That was their ministry.

Some of them, and Daniel of course was one who was particularly used in that area, had the function of telling the future. And I haven't done the study, and I would love to do that, but it would be a major study to work out of the number of words that we have in the Old Testament that are said or written down by the prophets, how much of that is related to telling the future and how much of that had to do with just preaching and drawing people back into their relationship with God, back to the law, back to the covenants. And my guess is that it is somewhere between 80% and 90% of what they said had to do with bringing people back to the basics, and maybe 10% had to do with foretelling the future.

Now, if that is true, then you see the mistake that is made is that people say, oh no, Old Testament prophets, they foretold the future. Now we say New Testament prophets must foretell the future. Now that's, as I said, a double mistake.

Because first of all, Old Testament prophets did not foretell the future. That was a small part of what they did, and secondly, we cannot look at Old Testament prophets to establish what New Testament prophets ought to do. So that whole idea of saying that because Old Testament prophets foretold the future, that's what New Testament, no, that is not where, if you're going to look at the Old Testament, and if there is a similarity, and I think there is a similarity between Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets, and that is that both preach the word.

The Old Testament prophets called men back to the law. The New Testament prophets called men back to the word of God. Now we have more of the word of God now than they had then.

They only called them back to the first five books. We can now call them back to the 66 books. And so in modern prophets, first responsibility and job is to preach the word.

Their second responsibility is to call men back to God, if you're going to base it on the Old Testament. And I think that there are those similarities, but that is really where the similarities end. I think the second thing we need to understand is that there is a major difference between the way in which prophets in the Old Testament spoke and the way prophets in the New Testament speak.

And we touched on this in the Wednesday night Bible study, but many of you were not there, so those will bear with me if you've heard this before. Prophets in the Old Testament spoke what the learned people call ecstatically. In other words, they were in a trance when they spoke.

They were in a different state of mind. Many of the times they did not know what they were saying. They did not have control over what they were saying.

They did not have control over what they would do, whether they would be lying on the floor, what position they would, because they were literally in a trance. They were in a state of ecstasy, much like drugs put you in that kind of euphoria. And that would be the position from which they would speak.

And as I said, they wouldn't even know what they were speaking most of the time. They would just be under the control of God's Spirit, and God would take control of them, and they would speak, much like the donkey. The donkey spoke prophetically.

Did the donkey know what he was speaking? Did he have any clue what he was doing? No, the donkey just spoke. And Balaam, the false prophet, remember that he wanted to speak, and he was not a false prophet up to that point. But the moment he sold himself for money, the whole picture changed.

But you remember, he opened his mouth to curse the people, and what comes out? Blessing. He had no control over what he would say. That was true of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, this is not true. In 1 Corinthians chapter 14, Paul is very clear that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. And he says this in the context of when a prophet wants to bring a third, or a fourth, or a fifth, or a sixth message.

He says, no, you can keep quiet. You can choose to keep quiet. Don't say the Spirit made me do it.

This is what he is saying. Now remember, this is what people are saying today. Oh no, when I bark like a dog, or I roar like a lion, or I'm you know, rolling on the floor, the Spirit made me do it.

No, that was true in the Old Testament. It's not true in the New Testament. Paul is very specific that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet.

In other words, the prophet is in control. He can choose what he's going to say. He can choose what he's going to do.

God gives him the anointing to do whatever it needs to be done, but he is in control. In the Old Testament it was different. The spirit was in control.

The prophet had no control. There is a major, major difference, and you need to look at all of the operational prophets in the Old Testament and the New Testament, and you will see that difference. Now that is very, very important, because when we understand that, many of the things that people are doing today under the name of prophecy is clearly not the right thing.

Paul deals with the Corinthians, and he says, but you know, you guys are crazy. You know, while one is speaking, another one is speaking, and you have 20 messages in tongues, and 15 prophecies, and everybody's going wild at the same time. He says, this should not be so.

God is a God of order, so when you speak in tongues, let there be two, and at the most three, and let one interpret, and when the prophets speak, let one speak at a time, and if something is revealed to another that sits there, let the first hold his peace, and I'm going to get on to that and explain that in a moment, but everything needs to happen decently and in order, and so while you're speaking, he says, if somebody else has another revelation, the first should sit down. In other words, he is not under the control of the Spirit where he cannot choose whether he's going to sit down or whether he's going to speak. Clearly, everything is under the control of the prophet in the New Testament, which is different to the Old Testament.

You see, because the basis of this is that in the Old Testament, the Spirit would come upon them. You remember many occasions that speaks about the fact that the Spirit came upon them, and they did whatever they did, but in the New Testament, the Spirit no longer comes upon us. The Spirit comes within us, and we are filled with the Spirit from within.

It's a different dispensation. It's a different operation. In the Old Testament, the Spirit would come on you, and it would make you do something.

That term is only used in the New Testament concerning evil spirits, that the evil spirit came upon the man, and he did the things that he did, but in the New Testament, the Spirit of God does not come upon us. He comes within us, and he empowers us from within, and so there's a difference in the operation between those two. All right, now, there is a difference between Old Testament prophets in terms of their authority, and New Testament prophets in terms of their authority.

Old Testament prophets wrote the Word of God. Most of the Old Testament scriptures are written by the prophets, and even the first five books of Moses could be said to be prophetic in the sense that they were written by Moses, who was a prophet, and so most of the Old Testament was written by the prophets, because they had the authority to speak the very words of God, the very words of God. They had what the learned people call plenary inspiration.

In other words, they were inspired to speak word for word. Every word they spoke was the word that God gave them to speak. In the New Testament, the apostles have that authority.

I don't mean all apostles. I mean the Twelve and Paul. They had the authority to write the Word of God.

When Paul spoke, he says, that which I have received of the Lord, I deliver it unto you, and so when Paul wrote, he was writing the very Word of God, which was the authority that a prophet had in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we do not see the prophets having the same authority. You remember I mentioned the three men, Agabus, Judas, and Silas, who were prophets in the New Testament.

Not one of those men, anything that they wrote has been taken up in the scripture. The prophecies of Agabus are recorded, and we'll see that, in fact, they were not particularly wonderful prophecies, but they had no part in writing the New Testament. So you can see that, again, there's a difference between Old Testament prophets who wrote the Word of God and New Testament prophets who did not write the Word of God, where, in fact, apostles had that responsibility in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, a prophet was to be tested. Now, this is a very important point because many people who see the errors of these false prophets who are going about use the measures of an Old Testament prophet to prove that these men are false prophets. We cannot do that.

This is not right. I don't like the false prophets, but you can't use the scriptures in the book of Deuteronomy, for instance, that gives us various Deuteronomy chapter 13, 1 to 5, Deuteronomy 18, 20 to 22, basically says that if a prophet says this is going to happen and it doesn't happen, he's a false prophet. Or if a prophet comes and he says, let us serve other gods, he is a false prophet.

Now, we cannot use those measures to apply them to a New Testament prophet for this reason. The way in which a prophet is tested in the Old Testament is different to the way a prophet is tested in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, a prophet was tested as to whether he was a prophet.

If he was proven to be a prophet, his words were beyond question. Everything he said was beyond question. And so when Samuel speaks to Saul or when Samuel speaks to any of the, or any of those prophets speak to the king, if he was tested and passed the test as being a valid prophet, when he spoke, those were the words of God.

And so when Nathan comes to David and he says, you're the man, those were the words of God. Now in the New Testament, there is no scripture that tells us that we need to test the prophet. And once he passes the test, he is now a prophet.

Now, obviously we understand in the Old Testament, he can be disqualified like, who's the guy I mentioned with the donkey? Balaam. Balaam, you know, at one time he seemed to be a genuine prophet, but then he was, became a prophet for hire and he was disqualified. Doesn't, so obviously he can become disqualified.

But in the New Testament, we don't have any tests like that. But what do we do? What do we have to do in the New Testament? Go with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 29. Let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge.

But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. So what are they judging here? Are they judging the prophet or are they judging his message? They judging the message. You could not do this to an Old Testament prophet.

You had no choice as to if he was established to be a prophet of God, you had to accept his message. In the New Testament, the prophet is not a, does not have carte blanche. He is not proven to be a prophet and therefore his words are infallible.

Whenever a prophet speaks, Paul says, judge. So the prophet doesn't have the same authority and you do not have the privilege of being able to say, yeah, he's, he is a proven prophet and so whenever he speaks, we'll just accept what he says. No, whenever he speaks, you need to judge.

Now you'll see that it says, let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge. Now that's a long issue and if you want a more detailed explanation, I can give you the sections out of the book that deal with that. But some people say the others mean the other prophets.

Some say it means the elders and some like myself believe that it speaks about the whole of the church and I have many, many reasons and I have to analyze this in great detail that the responsibility for judging the words of the prophets lies with every individual in the church. And so we need to, and you'll see in fact, part of the reason is the potential of confusion because then Paul says, but there, you know, we can't have confusion in the church. And he deals with the issue of women speaking and asking questions and it's in the context, this particular section is in the context of questioning the words of a prophet.

And so whenever a prophet speaks, we need to judge whether those are indeed the words of God or whether it's the words of a man. Very, very important. So a prophet in the New Testament is never at a stage where he can become above question.

Obviously we understand that some men are false prophets. There are many warnings in Matthew chapter seven already. I think there's like eight or nine warnings in the New Testament about false prophets.

And in Matthew chapter seven, Jesus speaks about false prophets who will be known by their fruit. And that's, and so if somebody is clearly discredited as a false prophet, then we don't even have to judge his words. You're wasting your time because nothing true can come out of him unless it's, it has some ulterior motive.

And obviously we, we, we can have a situation where we have a relationship with a, with a brother who is recognized as a prophet and who has proven himself over a period of time and where we can maybe relax our guard a little bit and say, well, you know, this brother, we, we know him, we know his fruit, we know his life, we know his ministry, and we know that he, that he speaks the truth. And so we, we, we, we can, but, but we can never come to a point, doesn't matter whether it's with a prophet or a, or any ministry, that we let our guard down and we just say, well brother, you just tell us whatever you, you know, and we'll just listen. We need to always be always checking the word of God.

Doesn't matter how long, because the problem is that you get brothers who've been on the road for 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, 50 years, and at the end of the road begin to go off into error. And if we, if we just go along with that, we're going to end up in error also. And so we always need to check whether this is indeed the word of God.

And so there's the difference then between the testing of the man in the Old Testament and the testing of the words of the prophet in the New Testament. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 20, verse 19, do not quench the spirit. Verse 20, do not despise prophecies.

Test all things, hold fast what is good. And again, he connects these two things. Don't despise prophecies, but test them, test everything.

And obviously, what do we test against? Against the word of God. That has to be our final test. So when a prophet comes and he says something, which is contrary to the word of God, or in addition to the word of God, we, we have every right to discount that.

We, we have to stick with the word of God. Obviously we, we, we can also test with, because the, the, the, you know, there's the ability to discern and there's a gift of discernment. And so there may be something in our spirits that says, you know, this may not be very good.

We need to be sensitive to, to the, to the spirit of God that directs us in that way. But we cannot reject the prophecy or accept the prophecy just on the basis of how we feel. It has to be on the basis of what the word of God says.

And so that has to be our, our, our measure every time that we, we listen to the words of a prophet. Now go back with me again to 1 Corinthians chapter 14. And, um, you might as well put your marker there because we're going to come back here a few more times.

1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 30. If anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. In verse 29, let two or three prophets speak, let the other judge.

If anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. Now this is a difficult verse, but in fact, it's not very difficult if you just believe what the scripture says. So clearly what he is saying is prophets speak.

There may be two prophets or three prophets who speak. They speak one at a time. He's clear about that.

But one of the prophets is speaking. And then another one sits and something is revealed to him while the first one is speaking. He has the privilege or the prerogative to say, brother, I have something to say.

Now you can see that this can lead to order. And that's why Paul goes on and he says, be careful. Everything has to be done decently and in order.

But while the prophet is speaking, and he is maybe saying something which is not right, there may be another brother who gets up and says, I have something to say. And he says, let the first sit down, hold his peace so that the second one can speak. So you can see that there's no sense of these guys having authority to speak without being checked and without even being corrected publicly.

The kind of authority that these men have today to walk into a church and to prophesy all sorts of things over people's lives and to demand all sorts of things. And you need to sell your house and give the money to the church and all of this kind of stuff. And they just willy-nilly go on and do whatever they want to do and say whatever they want to say and make the most ridiculous claims.

I mean, it's crazy the stuff that some of these guys claim and prophesy. And nobody will stand up and say, brother, but in fact, that's not in the word. What you're saying is not correct.

And we say, but that's disorder. No, Paul says it has to be done orderly, but he's very, very specific. There's no mistake there.

If anything is revealed to another who sits by that the first, who's the first? The one who's speaking, let him keep silent. And so there's no way these guys have authority just to speak and to ramble on if they're in error. Now, obviously this doesn't mean that we can interrupt at any stage.

We need to be very sure that when we do interrupt a man who is speaking, that we have very good reason to interrupt. And I trust that by the grace of God, if any man was to come in amongst us and to come with some kind of prophecy that was not of God and that was not compatible with the word of God, that we will have the courage to stand up and say, brother, hang on. I have something to say.

And according to the scripture, you are required to sit down so that I can now speak. And we then bring correction rather than allow them to cause the kind of damage that they have. In fact, there is, I think, more damage being done through prophecies and words of prophecy in the church and the modern church today than through any other ministry in any other kind of era.

Whole churches, whole denominations have been prophesied away. Whole buildings have been given away. Many people have given up jobs and houses and possessions because of prophecy.

Many people's lives have been steered onto the rocks and shipwrecked because they've listened to prophecies that have been made, brought by men that is not of God. And that is indeed false prophecy. All right.

Now let's go to Agabus and I'm going to come back to Corinthians, maybe, but let's go to Acts chapter 11. And now let's see, having laid those principles, this ministry and operation in the man called Agabus. Acts chapter 11.

Now you can see that because of the amount of damage that has been done, especially in the last 30 years by these ministries, it's very easy to get to a place where many people are and say, there is no such thing as a modern prophet. We cannot do that. In all good conscience, we have to say the scripture clearly teaches this ministry.

And if it teaches that there are false prophets and there will be false prophets in the last days, clearly they have to be true prophets also. Now Acts chapter 11, and Agabus was a true prophet. He was not a false prophet, but I want you to notice very carefully how he operates and what happens here.

Acts chapter 11, verse 27. And in those days, prophets came from Jerusalem and Antioch. So it's not saying false prophets, prophets, that these men were recognized and accepted by the apostles and by the church to be prophets.

Verse 28, then one of them named Agabus stood up and showed by the spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. And this they also did and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

So he was foretelling the case. He was saying there's going to be a drought or a famine. And it was right because it happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

So, so he was spot on on this one. Sorry, I need to take one step back. I missed out an important step.

When you, when we spoke from 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 30, if something be revealed to another who sits by, this is an important word to understand when it is revealed, you see the revelation and, and it may come differently, but it comes by revelation. It may be a vision. It may be a thought.

It may be a series of thoughts. It may be some ideas it may, but God gives some kind of revelation because this is one of the attributes of a prophet is that he speaks by revelation. A teacher does not teach by revelation.

He teaches having studied the word of God and having, and then delivering the word of God. A prophet is, receives a revelation, a word from God. And he speaks that word.

And how do we know that it is a word from God? Because it's compatible with the word of God, but also because it ministers to our hearts. And so we said, but yeah, this is God speaking. No doubt because, because God knows my situation.

He knows my heart. He knows the things I'm speaking and struggling with. And, and, and he's giving this word for me without the brother having to name names and say, you know, God gave me a word for you, brother, that, you know, you must do this or that or the other thing, but just in speaking and preaching the word of God, we know that this in fact is a prophetic word.

And, and, and I've had that happen many, many times. Um, and in fact, on one of the occasions, it was even by a brother whose, whose denomination said that they did not believe in prophetic ministry. And he was a visiting speaker.

And I was a visitor in this particular church. I used to meet with this particular church because we only had an evening service at that time. We were starting a new church and we only had evening services on Sunday night.

And so Sunday morning, I would go along to this other church. I'd never seen this man. He'd come from another part of the country and he, and he began to preach and he was speaking directly to my heart, the very issues that I was struggling with and praying to God to give me direction on.

And, and he, he laid out clear direction and he didn't know he was speaking to me. He was just preaching the word that God had laid on his heart. But I knew that that was a prophetic word.

There was no doubt about it. And so, but it comes by revelation. Remember how the old Testament prophets got the message? Word for word, plenary inspiration, word for word inspiration.

New Testament prophets do not get it word for word. Therefore, it is wrong for New Testament prophets to say, thus sayeth the Lord. Because if he says, thus sayeth the Lord, then how can we judge that? And we are told to judge.

But if it's God speaking, I can't judge it. Or I, the Lord say to you, in fact, most of them speaking James English, I, the Lord sayeth unto thee. There's more inspiration when you're speaking James English, you see.

Now, we cannot do that because we're taking the responsibility of judging from, and they're not speaking word for word what God, they have a revelation, they have an idea, they have a vision, but they do not have the word for word kind of detail that the Old Testament prophets had. This is important. And when we

come to the next example of Agabus, let's go to Acts chapter 21 and verse 23, sorry, verse 10, Acts chapter 21 verse 10.

And sorry, let's just go back one verse to verse nine. And this man had four daughters, this is Philip, had four virgin daughters who prophesied. Were they prophets? No.

Very, very important. Most people will refer to them as prophets or prophetesses. It doesn't call them prophets or prophetesses.

It says they prophesied. Remember that there are nine gifts of the spirit. Three of those gifts are vocal gifts, tongues and interpretation and prophecy.

But the prophecy that is a gift of the spirit is not necessarily the same as the ministry of a prophet as in Ephesians 4, 11. All prophets will prophesy. Listen carefully.

But not everybody who prophesies is a prophet. And so these, this man had four daughters. They did prophesy.

In other words, from time to time, they would speak a word prophetically, but they were not recognized as prophets. There's a difference between those two things. And most people miss that.

And then verse 10, and as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus. You can see the difference right in these two verses. He had daughters who prophesied, but this man was a prophet.

And he was named Agabus. He came down from Judea. And when he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet and said, thus says the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And when we heard those things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, what do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I'm ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And so when he would not be persuaded, we ceased saying the will of the Lord be done.

Now, before I speak about the specifics of his prophecy, you can see that Paul did not regard the prophecy of this man as binding. When a prophet spoke in the Old Testament, you better be sure you listened to what he had to say. But here this man is speaking and he's saying the Holy Spirit revealed to me to say this to you.

And what did Paul say? Tough. I'm not listening to what you have to say. Very, very important.

We are not bound by the words of prophets. We are bound by the word of God and the will of God as he has revealed it to me. If God sends a word of prophecy and it confirms what God has been speaking to me, as I quoted that other instance to you, then I can accept that as a confirmation to what God is speaking to me.

But if God is saying to me, go to Jerusalem, and a prophet comes, and even if he is a wonderful brother that we recognize and he's been amongst us and we have confidence in him, and he says don't go to Jerusalem, I have to listen to what God tells me and not to what the prophet has to say. Very, very important. You see, today prophets are above question, and it doesn't matter what the prophet has to say.

People feel that they're obliged to do exactly what the man has had to say. No, we're not. Paul did not do what this man said, even though he was a good prophet, he was not a false prophet.

But I also want you to notice here, in verse 11, when he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, thus says the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. So what's going to happen? The Jews are going to capture you, and they're going to give you into the hands of the Gentiles, in other words, into the hands of the Romans. Now, let's go down to verse 23, no, verse 31, verse 30.

And all the city was disturbed, this is in Jerusalem, and the people ran together, who are these people? The Jews. The people ran together, seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. Now, as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

Who's the commander of the garrison? He's the Gentile, he's the Roman. He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them, and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came near and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and he asked who he was and what he had done.

So who bound Paul? The Romans. The Jews were going to kill him. The Jews had no intention of handing him over to Roman justice.

Now, what did Agabus say? The Jews are going to grab you, they're going to capture you and hand you over to the Romans. That's not what happened, but you can see the problem. You can see that what he received was not a word-for-word prophecy, it was a revelation, it was a ballpark, it was the idea.

The idea was right, but the specifics were wrong. And that's a very... Why is this recorded in scripture for us? As a warning, don't build your life on the words of prophets, because they don't have the specific details. They may have the idea.

Yeah, he had the idea, it was going to be in Jerusalem. The Jews would be involved, the Romans would be involved, there would be binding involved. But in fact, it was not the Jews who bound him.

In fact, what the Romans were doing at this stage is they were trying to save Paul. And to make sure that we understand it correctly, you'll find that in verse... I'm trying to rush and I'm missing out. But anyway, later on, you'll see in the chapter that it speaks about the fact that the centurion was afraid because he had bound Paul.

So twice, it's very specific that he was not bound by the Jews, but he was bound by the Romans. All right. What is prophecy then? And I have three minutes.

The word prophecy means inspired utterance, inspired speaking. There is a difference between preaching and teaching. Teaching is doing what I do, word for word, point by point.

Having studied the scriptures, having a gift to be able to do that, I trust I have a little bit, and then imparting that information and that knowledge in a logical step-by-step way to the heroes. And obviously, we trust that there is some inspiration and anointing on that teaching. But preaching is not teaching.

Preaching is that which really... Teaching deals with the intellect more than anything else. Preaching deals with the heart, deals with the emotions, and is looking for a response rather than to impart knowledge. And so there is a difference between those two.

Apollos, I believe, was also a prophet, although the scripture doesn't call him a prophet, because it says he was mighty in word. He was a powerful preacher. It doesn't say he was a powerful teacher, but he was a powerful preacher.

He was mighty in preaching the word. To me, that is a prophet. Somebody who, when we hear the word, our hearts are stirred to draw closer to God, to get back to the word of God, to obey the words of the Lord.

That is the function of prophets in the Old Testament, and I believe that that is still the function of prophets in the New Testament. This aspect of foretelling the future is a very, very minor part of what these prophets did. And in fact, when you study these other men, and we didn't have the time to do them, but Judas and Silas, you find that what they did was that they preached the word.

They preached. And so preaching, not all preaching is prophecy, but a lot of good prophecy comes in the form of preaching. And then in 1 Corinthians chapter, is it 14 or 12, it tells us that the purpose of prophecy is edification, exaltation, and comfort.

That is really the purpose of prophecy. And so a prophet's responsibility is to edify, to build up, to exhort, to encourage, and to give comfort. And obviously there is also an element of admonition or reproof or correction in the ministry of the prophets.

And so how do we know that it is, how do we know that someone is a prophet? Well, to me, if the of an evangelist, which we'll speak about next week, he is not a teacher, well, then he has to be a prophet. It's not that easy. It's not easy to put somebody in a category and say, he is, but when you see a prophet in operation and you see the way that he just has an impact on the church and an impact on those that hear him, one has to say, here is a man who speaks by the inspiration of God.

And oftentimes when you question him as to how he delivers his message, it often is by revelation. Unlike what I do when I have to, I have to spend a lot of time praying and understanding what it is that God wants me to preach. And there are times when I'm able to operate without those restraints, but a prophet will often get into the pulpit and not have a clue what he's going to preach.

And he'll begin to speak the word of God, not because he receives word by word inspiration, but simply because he received the revelation. And that revelation may come before or during or immediately before the meeting, but he speaks by that inspiration and by that revelation that comes. Amen.

We've run out of tape and so we'll answer some questions. I haven't covered the subject well.

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