

The Truth About Prophecy - Introduction - Part 1

by Zac Poonen

The truth about prophecy can only be found in Scripture, and it is a tremendous privilege and honor to speak forth the words of God.

Duration: 54:12

Scripture: Numbers 12:6-8, Proverbs 29:18, Jeremiah 1:9, Ezekiel 33:7, Matthew 4:10, Matthew 11:25, John 10:11, John 17:17, 1 Corinthians 13:9-10

Topics: "Biblical Prophecy", "Spiritual Discernment"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the different aspects of prophecy in the Bible, highlighting the need for a clear understanding of what true prophecy entails. It addresses the confusion surrounding prophecy in different Christian groups, the importance of being governed by the Word of God alone, and the significance of having a pure heart and open mind to receive God's revelations. The sermon also discusses the value of prophecy, the dangers of counterfeit prophecy, and the characteristics of true prophets as seen in the Old Testament.

Transcript

It's always a great joy to come here and speak from God's Word. So this evening and the next two evenings, I want to speak on the subject, the truth about prophecy. Now you would have read the word prophecy many times in the Bible, and there are many different conceptions about it among different Christian groups.

I have been in a number of them. Some believe that there is no such thing as prophecy today, it's all finished with the completion of the Bible. Now, they say that is the perfect that is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13, after which there will be no prophecy.

That's one extreme. And then at the other extreme, you have people who encourage others to say whatever comes to their mind, and to call it prophecy. So, we have these extremes in Christendom, and I'm sure God is very sad, and the devil is very happy at the confusion he has brought, not only in this area, but in a lot of other areas.

Now, to escape from confusion, and to get out of the counterfeit, we must determine in our minds that our thinking will be governed only by the Word of God, by what is written in the Bible, the whole Bible, not a part of it, the whole of it, and by no outside source. Now, you may say, yes, I'm willing for that, but it is not easy, because all of us have come from a certain tradition, different church traditions. I think someone who comes from a non-Christian background would probably find it much easier.

But those who have come from a Christian background have got a certain tradition in their particular church background that has taught them something which they have unconsciously absorbed, and it is at the back of their mind, and when they read the scriptures, they interpret it according to what they have been taught in their tradition. So it becomes very difficult for such people to get light on the scriptures, very difficult almost for God Himself to give them any light. So it is very important to come with a simple mind and open heart.

Jesus once said in Matthew 11, 25, I thank you, Father, that you have hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent, and you have revealed them to babes. Now we could have a whole study on that, on what it means to be a babe. Jesus took babes and presented them as examples of humility.

But there is another thing about a babe. When a babe is born, its mind is empty of all knowledge. It studies from a zero level onwards, and I think one of the meanings of what Jesus was saying there is if you can come to that zero level, in other words, say, Lord, I want to get rid of all my preconceived ideas and opinions about prophecy, and in these days I want to allow my mind to be influenced only by the Word of God.

So I'm not going to give you examples from my life, because that's not the foundation for understanding the truth. Jesus said in John 17, sanctify them through the truth. Thy word is truth.

So the truth about prophecy can only be found in Scripture. And if we come to it with an open mind, free from the prejudices we have because of what we have seen around or our tradition, I believe God can show us something. Now, we know there's a lot of counterfeit prophecy, just like there's counterfeit tongues, counterfeit healing.

Anything valuable is counterfeited. Valueless things are not counterfeited. Nobody counterfeits brown paper, nobody counterfeits newspapers.

People counterfeit diamonds, gold, currency notes. What is similar about all these things? They're valuable. So if prophecy is counterfeited, you can be pretty sure that the original is very valuable.

We got to start from there. This is not a subject in which we say, well, it doesn't really matter whether I understand it or not. The main thing is to live a holy life and go out and witness to people.

Well, if that was all there was to our Christian life, I think God could have written the Bible in about two pages, or to the life of Jesus, and that's it. But there's a lot more written in Scripture in the Old Testament and the New Testament about prophecy, which means God wants us to know about it. So prophecy is God communicating His Word to man through His servant.

God has always desired to speak to man. In fact, the very first page of the Bible, you find a number of times it says, God said, God said, God said, on each day of the remaking of the earth, God said, God said, God said. And notice that when the earth accepted that word, something happened.

The trees began to come up, or the animals were created, or the fish came into the sea. Something happened when the earth responded to that word. All that is written in the first page of the Bible to teach us one thing, that there's a tremendous power in the undiluted Word of God.

And prophecy is to speak the undiluted Word of God. And if we can progress to this place where more and more our words are coming from God and His Word, not just from our own thoughts, there can be a tremendous power in those words to change people's lives. I want you to turn, first of all, to Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, to see something of the tremendous privilege that is ours in this day and age in which we are living.

In Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, on the day of Pentecost, the apostles began to speak in tongues. Now they could have taken a verse from Isaiah, which is quoted in 1 Corinthians 14 with stammering lips, and another tongue will I speak to this people. But Peter did not quote that verse.

Isn't that interesting? They were speaking in tongues, but he didn't quote the verse in the Old Testament that referred to it. Instead, he quoted another verse when they asked, what is this thing we hear? Of course, they all understood in their own language. And Peter said in Acts 2, verse 17-16, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

What is that? It shall be in the last days, I'll pour out my spirit on all mankind. Now this was not true in Old Testament times. In Old Testament times, the spirit was poured out on stray individuals.

One person here, then maybe a hundred years later, another person there, and maybe two hundred years later, another person there. But now, the Lord says, his heart's desire is to pour out his spirit, the same spirit he poured out on Elijah, on Elisha, on Gideon, on David, which made them accomplish those mighty things for God. God's heart's desire is to pour out this spirit on all flesh, on all mankind, and that includes you and me.

That's why it's wonderful to be living in days after the day of Pentecost rather than before. And when this happens, when the spirit is poured out upon people, he does not say, your sons and daughters will speak in tongues. Now praise God for the gift of tongues, it's a very useful gift by which we can edify ourselves.

But, the verse Peter quotes is, your sons and daughters will prophesy. And I wish people had been more eager to have this verse fulfilled in their life. When I pour out my spirit, your sons and your daughters will prophesy.

Now, in the Old Testament, it was rare when a woman prophesied. There were a few, but we can count them on the fingers of one hand. There was Miriam, there was Deborah, there was a prophetess in Jeremiah's time called Hilda, there was Isaiah's wife who was a prophetess, and Anna, you read of in Luke chapter 1, who was living under the Old Covenant.

That's about it. But the male prophets were many, many, many, many. It speaks about hundreds of them.

There was a tremendous disproportion between men and women in the gift of prophecy in the Old Testament. But now, it is all going to be different. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and it doesn't matter what your social level is, because it says in verse 18, upon my bond slaves, men and women, I'll pour out my spirit and they will also prophesy.

Now, that of course refers to people who are bond slaves of Jesus Christ. My bond slaves, those who are totally committed, like a slave who has no rights to obey Jesus completely, God says they will prophesy. Jesus began his ministry in the temptation in the wilderness with these words.

The first temptation, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That is prophecy. The very first words that Jesus spoke related to prophecy.

The first chapter in the Bible, Genesis 1, speaks about God speaking. When Adam went astray and tried to hide from God, you find God coming to him and speaking to him, saying, where are you? So, prophecy is to speak forth the words of God. It's a tremendous privilege and a tremendous honor.

Now, as I said in the old covenant, only a few people had this gift of prophecy. Only a few people could be in contact with God because the spirit was only upon a few people. And you read in the Old Testament that when people wanted to know what was God's will in a particular matter, they would go to the prophet, and sometimes the prophet would say, bring me somebody with a guitar, let me listen to some music, and then after some time he would say what God was saying, or he would say, come back after two days, or wait, he would say.

But nobody could find out God's will themselves. But in the New Covenant, I want you to notice this difference in Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 11. Now, Hebrews chapter 8, the whole chapter is dealing with the difference between the Old New Covenant and the Old Covenant.

The Old Covenant was a list of commandments made, basically, the Ten Commandments. But in the New Covenant, he says, I'll make a new covenant in verse 8. And in this New Covenant, there are a number of distinctive features about this New Covenant. I don't want to go into all of them, I don't have time, but I just want to mention this one thing.

Verse 11, they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, saying, know the Lord. In other words, it's not a prophet who has to come and say, well, this is what the Lord is saying. You don't have to go through him.

All shall know me. This was impossible under the Old Covenant. Why? Because everybody could not receive the Spirit.

But it's possible under the New Covenant, when the Spirit is poured out upon us, that we come to know God. Jesus said, eternal life, John 17.3, is to know God and Jesus Christ. And all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them.

And it is from that knowledge that prophecy comes. That's why a more mature Christian, his prophecy will be more mature and more reliable than an immature Christian who has not taken the trouble to know the Lord, or who has not allowed the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon him. There are many Christians in the world who have not had the Holy Spirit poured out on them.

They assume, yeah, I have it, but I don't want to assume, I want to be sure. And you must be sure, because the gift of prophecy is for those upon whom God pours out His Spirit. They waited in that upper room, and God poured out His Spirit, and they began to prophesy.

Now we read that again in three occasions in the Acts of the Apostles, where the Spirit was poured out. One was Acts chapter 2, which we just read, and the other was in the house of Cornelius, and it says, as soon as the Holy Spirit was poured out, they heard them speaking, exalting God. That's in Acts 10, 46.

So they were also prophesying, exalting God. And then in Acts 19, when Paul laid hands on people and the Holy Spirit came on them, there also it says they prophesied. It was a fulfillment of what it says in Joel chapter 2, that the Spirit came upon them, and they prophesied.

They spoke in tongues, and they prophesied. So prophecy is a direct result of the Spirit coming upon us. Even the Old Testament prophets, they could not prophesy until the Spirit came upon them.

Now because of this, it's very easy for people to fool other Christians who don't know God's Word, and to try and convince them that I'm prophesying something to you. I want to show you a couple of verses in this connection. 1 John chapter 2, and it says here, ask for you.

Now he's writing, I want you to notice the context. Verse 26, I have written these things to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. See, deception is not something found in 21st century Christianity.

It is found in the 1st century also. It is found in the Old Testament also. There were false prophets who prophesied, he's saying, thus said the Lord.

The Old Testament is full of examples of false prophets, and there were many more false prophets than true prophets. The true prophets are very rare, but the false prophets were a great number. You read of people like Micaiah in the days of Ahab and Jehoshaphat confronting many, many false prophets.

You read of Jeremiah confronting many, many false prophets. The Old Testament is full of examples of true prophets speaking forth God's Word and confronting false prophets who were trying to deceive God's people. We're not talking about false prophets in other religions.

We're talking about false prophets in Israel who took the Bible, which they had, Genesis to Malachi in those days, and spoke forth, saying, thus said the Lord. And hundreds and thousands of Jewish people were deceived. And very often, they got so angry with the true prophets, they beat them, persecuted them and locked them up, and they honored the false prophets.

Please remember this history in the Old Testament. And these things are written for our instruction. And the same thing is happening today.

And there's a saying that if you don't study history, you will repeat it yourself in your own life. But if you study history, you can avoid those mistakes. The reason why three quarters of your Bible is the Old Testament is to warn you about the mistakes that those people made.

Be careful that you don't make the same mistake yourself. And so the proportion of false prophets were very huge compared to the true prophets in the Old Testament. You can be pretty sure it's the same today.

So he says, I'm writing these things concerning those who are trying to deceive you. And but as for you, the anointing which you receive, that's the Holy Spirit abides in you. And you really don't need anyone to teach you whether this person is a genuine prophet or not.

Isn't that an amazing verse? You don't really need a godly older brother there to come and tell you, hey, watch this man, watch this man, because it says this anointing itself will teach you about all things. And that anointing is true. That's great.

Because you don't always have an older brother around to guide you. Somebody comes and prophesies something to you. How in the world do you know whether that's a genuine prophecy or not? You got the

anointing within.

The Bible says in Romans chapter 8, verse 6, that the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. That's been a very helpful verse for me to find out God's will. Life and peace.

That's how I know whether the Spirit is leading me in a certain direction. When the Spirit responds to something I hear from someone, it produces in me an upsurge of life, resurrection life, and peace in my heart. Then I know, this is right.

But if I find a disturbance in my heart, then the Spirit is telling me, be careful. Listen to that voice. If there's one advice I give to all of you young people, it is this.

Listen to that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit within you. That will save you from many calamities. Don't be just deceived by everything you see and hear around you.

I want you to turn to 1 John chapter 4. John is so burdened about deception. This is the last apostle. All the other apostles are dead.

He has seen what has happened to Christendom. So many churches are backslidden and he writes concerning deception a lot in this letter because he wants to protect God's people because he has seen so many people being deceived. 1 John 4, verse 1, a very needed verse today.

Today, whenever we question whether something is of the Holy Spirit, is that man's healing ministry from the Holy Spirit? Is that prophecy from the Holy Spirit? Immediately, some people will say, oh, be careful. Don't judge. Don't judge.

You may sin against the Holy Spirit. Well, I'm not afraid of those words and don't you be afraid of those words because the Bible also says, beloved, don't believe every spirit, 1 John 4, verse 1. I'm amazed at the number of Christians today who see anything supernatural and they immediately believe that is God. Christianity is a supernatural religion.

I believe that we must all experience the supernatural in our lives, but everything supernatural is not from God and we must discern which supernatural thing is from the devil and which is from God. Otherwise, we'll get thoroughly deceived. It'll be a big hodgepodge and usually we'll end up with a lot more of the devil than God.

It's very, very important. So don't believe every spirit, but what does it say you should do? Please obey this exhortation all your life. Test the spirits to see whether they are from God and particularly in this area of prophecy, I would say one of the most important requirements is to test the spirit.

When a man says to me, thus said the Lord, what am I supposed to do? I'm not supposed to believe it outright. No. If you do that, you're disobeying God's word.

I'm supposed to test that spirit. Is that from God? Does the Holy Spirit bear witness within me? And I'll just mention a few more things because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Not one or two, many.

And if there were many in the first century, can you imagine how many there are today in the 21st century? Christendom is filled with false prophets, false prophets just like Israel. And what should we do when these false prophets are floating around? Test their spirit. One of the earliest Christian books, which has come

down to us through nearly 20 centuries, is a book that was written in the 2nd century, a little booklet called the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles or the Didache.

I'm sure you have it in your library here. It's only a few pages, maybe 15, 16 pages. But I found so much of wise instruction there.

It's not part of the Bible, treat it like a Christian book, not inspired scripture. But like good Christian books we read today, read it like a Christian book. I want to share with you something that is in that book.

They gave a three-fold test to find out false prophets. Because in those days, in the early 1st century, remember, there was no written Bible. And the few handwritten copies of false letters, very few people had.

Can you imagine if you lived in a world where you didn't have a New Testament? And you didn't even have an Old Testament, only it was in the synagogue perhaps. Can you imagine how prone you would be to deception? I mean, even with the Bible in your hand, people are being deceived. Can you imagine how it was in those days? How did the apostles protect people from deception when they didn't have a Bible in their hand? This type of printed Bible is only about 500-600 years old.

There was no printing or binding and all before that. It was in expensive scrolls that they wrote the Bible. And here are hundreds and thousands of believers all over and none of them have got a Bible at home.

At least the Jews who were converted had the Old Testament they learned from childhood. What about the Gentiles who had all types of heathen ideas? And then they got converted to Christ and they don't have a Bible at home. Can you imagine if you were converted from heathenism to Christ and you didn't have a Bible for 10 years? But you know, in those days they depended more on the Holy Spirit and they gave certain guidelines to these people.

And they said, if somebody comes to you, they gave three tests in that book. One is, if a man calls himself a prophet and he wants to stay in your house beyond the time that is needed for his ministry, taking advantage of your hospitality, he's a false prophet. So be careful of those who take advantage of you.

It need not be just your hospitality, it may be any other way they take advantage of you, that's a false prophet. A true prophet, like Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 1 to 4, I never took advantage of you, he told the Corinthians. That's a mark of a true prophet.

He'll never, never take advantage of you or your weakness in any way. Second, if that man asks you for money, he's a false prophet. That's a pretty easy test.

And if he claims, this is also in that book, if he claims that he is speaking in the Holy Spirit and asks you to give him something, money or something else, don't listen to him. But, it goes on to say, if he tells you to give money to somebody else who is in need, that's okay. And the third one, the third test, the one who does not practice what he teaches is a false prophet.

It is from his way of life that you'll be able to discern between a false prophet and a true prophet. This is the ultimate test, his way of life. For not everyone who claims to speak in the Spirit is a true prophet.

He must have the ways of the Lord, that is the Spirit of Christ. So therefore, when we want to check up on this matter of false prophets, we think of what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 concerning false prophets.

In Matthew chapter 7 he said, verse 15, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, now it's very important to recognize where this word comes.

The Sermon on the Mount is a teaching full of emphasis on holiness. There's no teaching there on healing, there's no teaching there on prosperity, there's no teaching there on many, many subjects. From Matthew chapter 5 on till the end of 7, it's teaching holiness.

Living before God's face, being free from the world, forgiving, loving, etc. And then at the end of that, Jesus says, beware of false prophets. I think in the context it means the false prophets will not emphasize the things that I have just spoken to you from Matthew 5 to 7. They will not emphasize that, they will emphasize something else.

Beware of false prophets, Matthew 7, verse 15, who come to you in sheep's clothing. Sheep's clothing means they come with the Bible in their hand. They talk the right Christian language.

But inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Now if a wolf gets into the midst of sheep, what do you think he wants? Do you think he has come to bless the sheep? He wants something from the sheep. Their flesh, their meat, and he wants to bite and take something.

And Jesus said, false prophets are greedy within to get something from you. You are an innocent sheep. And they come in with the sheep's clothing and they want to get something from you.

And they will prophesy. And their aim is to get something from you. It may be your money, it may be your obedience, it may be to get you under their power.

Whatever it is. Cult leaders very often preach in such a way as to make people feel guilty. And when you keep on preaching in a way that you make people feel guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty, any psychologist will tell you that's the best way to control people.

Beware of preaching that makes you feel guilty all the time. Jesus didn't go around making people feel guilty. He encouraged them.

The Holy Spirit convicted but always brought cleansing. So there are many techniques that false prophets have. Then Jesus told us how to distinguish a true prophet from a false prophet.

Verse 16 of Matthew 7. You will know them by their fruits. Notice again the emphasis on fruit, not gift. Most Christians that I have met evaluate a person according to his gifts.

They feel if a man can prophesy, he can heal the sick, and he can do miracles, he must be a great man of God. I don't agree. Because Jesus says you must evaluate them by the fruit of their life.

Jesus speaks about fruit and gifts in this passage. He speaks about both. Jesus had fruit and gifts.

So I'm not against gifts. We can't serve the Lord without the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But when Jesus spoke about fruit and gifts here in this passage, he said it's by the fruit that you know them.

For example, he spoke about gifts. In verse 22. He said in the last day, many will come to me and say, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Did not we prophesy in the name of Jesus? Didn't we cast out demons in the name of Jesus? Didn't we do miracles in the name of Jesus? Not one or two, verse 22.

Many people. And I will say to them, verse 23. If I were to paraphrase it.

You did not live holy lives. You did not live the type of life I spoke here in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. You who practice sin.

I'm not impressed by your gifts. By their fruits, you shall know them. And not by their gifts.

And so, what is the example we have? God has given us not only words. In the Old Testament, they only had words to protect them. A Bible.

Genesis to Malachi. But in the New Testament, God has given us something far better than just a Bible. The Bible is excellent.

What can be better than that? Jesus himself. The word become flesh. So that we have an example.

You know that an example is always better than instruction. I often say that a person, if he wants to teach you swimming. It's better he gets into the pool and shows it practically.

Than explain swimming on a blackboard to you. You won't learn it from a blackboard. An example is better than instruction.

And that's why the New Testament is better. And so we have an example in Jesus. He is our role model.

He is the one whom I look at. Who prophesied better than anybody else. Who was the greatest prophet that walked on the earth.

But he had a life behind that ministry. And that's what made him a true prophet. So whenever, I've had this practice for many years.

Whenever I hear of a preacher or hear a preacher. I try to see how he fits in to this picture I have of Jesus from the Gospels. Particularly in the area of money.

Two areas I try to check up. One is money and the other is humility. There are many things in Jesus.

But let's start with these. There is holiness, love, everything else. But it's good to start with these.

I see Jesus had a certain attitude to money. He never preached for money. He never healed for money.

He never asked people for money for himself. He was concerned that poor people should be given money. That he was concerned about.

But for himself. He never asked people for money. He received money.

Certain rich people gave him money. He accepted it. But he never asked people.

And he did not love money. He did not preach for money. He did not heal for money.

He did not prophesy for money. He did not cast out demons for money. So that's my example.

And when I see a person doing things for money. And asking you for money. I'm not here to judge him.

There is a difference between disagreement and criticism. God is his judge. I'm not here to condemn him.

I say I disagree with that. And I say I don't see that in Jesus. I remember I was in a meeting some time ago.

Where I said I never see in Jesus life even one case. Where he laid hands on somebody and made the man fall down. Not even one case.

But I do see in the gospels how demons cast people down. So somebody said, Does that mean all these people who are doing that are demon possessed? I said no, you are misquoting me now. Don't say more than I said.

What did I say? I said I don't see that in the life of Jesus. Or in the lives of the apostles. Full stop.

I'm not saying anything more than that. The rest is for you to decide. But for me Jesus is my example in everything.

And that has saved me from so many problems. Whenever you hear somebody prophesying. Check in the area of money.

Check in the area of humility. Check whether he is interested in washing your feet. Whether he has got a servant attitude.

That's how Jesus was. And does his life back up as far as you know? His ministry. Otherwise you have got to be careful.

Now many people sometimes they say, Well, there are results in his ministry brother. Many years ago the Lord told me, Don't evaluate your life by the results of your ministry. That's a great deception.

A servant of God can be disobedient in his personal life. And have tremendous results in his ministry. I'll give you an example.

If you read Numbers chapter 20 sometime. You read there that God told Moses to speak to the rock. It was the second time.

And Moses did not speak to the rock. He hit the rock. Did the water flow? Yes.

Was there blessing in that ministry? Yes. Do you know how many people got blessed? 600,000 men. Plus an equal number of women plus children.

There must have been at least 20 lakhs of people there. 20 lakhs of people got blessed through Moses' ministry getting water. But Moses was disobedient.

Can God use a disobedient person to bless 20 lakhs of people today? Why not? But afterwards God dealt with Moses. Moses, God said, I bless the people. What did it prove when the water flowed? Listen to this.

When the water flowed, it did not prove that God was supporting Moses. It proved that God loved those 20 lakhs of people. And when God blesses my ministry, that does not prove that God is happy with me.

It proves that God loves those people to whom I'm ministering. So a person may prophesy. And there may be something good come out of it.

God may not support him at all. God may send him to hell at the end of his prophecy. That's what we read in Matthew 7. When they say, Lord, we prophesy in your name.

He says, get away from me. Go to hell. So, please remember this.

These are the words of Jesus at the end of the sermon on the mount. There is nothing wrong in our disagreeing with other believers. We don't have to criticize them.

We got to love them. But we don't have to agree with everybody. In fact, if you agree with everybody around you, you'll go astray yourself.

So this is something that we must bear in mind. There are many people who call themselves Christians. But who got the spirit of Gehazi.

Gehazi was sort of a junior prophet to Elisha. But he ran after Naaman to get money. Balaam.

Balaam was a man who prophesied. He even prophesied about the coming of Jesus Christ. Did you know that? And, but he loved money.

He went after money and he was killed. He's gone to hell. There are other people like that.

Judas Iscariot. We read in Matthew chapter 10 that Jesus gave Judas among all the other apostles, along with them, power to raise the dead, to cleanse the lepers, to heal the sick. And I'm sure Judas did it.

But he went to hell. A man can prophesy and go to hell. So I say, if I see people like that today, who love money like Gehazi and Balaam and Judas, I can't work with them.

I mean, they may call themselves Christians. I don't think there was anything wrong in Judas's doctrine or Gehazi's doctrine. Sometimes we say doctrine is enough.

It's not enough for me. By their fruits you shall know them. I want to see what is this man's attitude to money.

So I cannot work with the Balaam's and the Gehazi's and the Judas's and the Demas's who love this present world today. I mean, it doesn't matter if people call me exclusive. But I can't work with them because I don't think Jesus can work with them.

We can work with people who make mistakes, like John Mark. He was a sincere young man who made a mistake. Paul said we can't take him.

But later on, Paul changed his mind and said, we can work with him. We can work with people who make mistakes, who are sincere, who are willing to correct those mistakes. But we can't work with people who are deceptive, who are crafty, who are like foxes.

Now I want to just say a few things as an introduction now to some of the ministries of prophets that we read of in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is like a foundation on which the New Testament is built up. And there are a number of words used in the Old Testament to describe prophets.

Let me just mention them first of all. These are Hebrew words, but if you were to translate them or try and get the concept of it into English, one is called a seer. A seer is one who can see further than other people.

You read about that in 1 Samuel 9, and verse 18, where Samuel is called a seer. And that's a ministry of a prophet. Prophecy is to be able to see ahead.

It need not necessarily be foretelling the future. There was a lot of foretelling the future in the Old Testament, in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many of the Old Testament prophets. But when you come over into the New Testament, that seems to reduce considerably.

We must recognize this. We're not living in the Old Testament. We'll come to that when we study it later this week.

But remember this. To see ahead means something like this. Supposing I'm leading a church, and the church elders are discussing, shall we do this particular thing? Shall we adopt this policy? And they may not be able to see, but I can see.

Now, it's only one degree off track, but if we go like this, in the beginning we won't be far away from the main direction God wants us to go, but ten years from now, we'll be miles away from where God wants us to be. That is being a seer. Seeing is one of the greatest needs in churches.

To say, what will happen if we allow this type of music to come in? What will happen, not now, twenty years from now, that is seeing. What will happen if we allow this chap to come here and preach regularly? Nothing may happen initially. If you've studied geometry, you know one degree is very little out of 360 degrees.

But in the long run, that can take you miles away from your goal. So that's part of seeing. A seer.

One who sees, and he gets this knowledge because he sees God. Because his heart is pure, Jesus said, blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God. Now I want to show you a passage in Numbers, and chapter 12.

In Numbers chapter 12, the Lord describes Moses. And I want you to see something here that will really open your eyes concerning how we should know God. Numbers chapter 12.

We read here that Miriam and Aaron were criticizing Moses, because of whom he married. And the Lord came down and stood in a pillar of cloud, verse 5, and said, verse 6, Numbers 12, 6. Listen to my words. If there is a prophet among you, if there is a prophet among you, this is Old Testament, I will make myself known to him in a vision.

Remember they had no Bible, and they needed these things much more than we do. I will make myself known to him in a vision, I will speak to him in a dream. But, not so with my servant Moses.

Now you would think that if somebody said he had a dream or a vision, he must be a man very close to God. No. Read these words carefully, meditate on them later.

Moses, God says, I don't speak to Moses through visions and dreams. A lot of Christians today are excited when they have a vision or a dream. I want to say that's not the highest.

You know what the highest is? Moses, I speak to him face to face, mouth to mouth, not with veiled sayings, dark sayings. He beholds my face. Which is superior? A vision, or a dream, or speaking to Jesus face to face? The answer is very, very clear.

And so, it's important to keep that in mind. It's because we listen to God face to face and we can't see God if our heart is not pure. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Because of that, a man's vision gets sharpened. He's able to see in the future what will happen if he goes in this direction. A second word, found in the Old Testament, is a word which symbolizes one who gazes and contemplates.

It's similar to the earlier one. But we would say like a worshiper, a mystic. I would call him a mystic.

A mystic is one for whom heaven is more real than earth. And he gazes and looks. Like Jesus said, a man must worship God before he serves.

Thou shalt worship, Matthew 4, 10, and then thou shalt serve. This man worships. And as he worships, God shows him things concerning the need of people.

God shows him things concerning his own need. And he is able to share that vision that he has. This is a person who's got a vision.

The Bible says in Proverbs 29, in verse 18, that where there is no vision, the people perish. A prophet is a man who's got a vision for the future. I don't mean visions of seeing angels and things like that.

But a vision of, say, what God can do in India through you. That's a vision. God has to show you.

This is what I can do through you. You are yielded to me. A vision.

And as I cooperate with God over the years, we find that accomplished. A third word. I'll give you one example of this.

See, for example, in the Old Testament, we read that the children of Israel came back from Babylon and they didn't build a temple. Then Haggai and Zechariah were prophets with vision. And they stirred the people and presented them a vision of a completed temple.

They said, this temple is going to have a greater glory than anything you've seen before. And that challenged them. And they began to build a temple.

That's the spirit of prophecy. It encourages people who are lazy and half-hearted to be wholehearted, be committed to the vision of doing the work of God. A third word is the word burden bearer.

One who bears a burden. Many times you read in Isaiah, particularly chapters 13 to 23, the first verse of all those chapters, the burden concerning this, the burden concerning that, the burden concerning that. You read that in Nehum, Habakkuk, Zechariah.

They had a burden. And whenever God has got a plan for your life, the way He indicates that is by giving you a burden. These prophets had a burden.

And that burden is the indication of God's plan for your life. Your burden may be evangelism. Your burden may be teaching.

Your burden may be something else. Your burden may be like Mother Teresa's, to help the poor people. It's a burden in the heart.

A burden is like a baby a mother carries in the womb. A prophet carries this burden like a baby and brings it to birth one day. And you know, a mother has to carry it, carry it, carry it, and bring it to birth.

And when God puts a little burden on your heart, like the mother preserves that baby and is very, very careful, preserve that burden. See, this is all preparation for a ministry of prophecy. To live before God, to see His face, and to be a worshipper, and then to have a burden that He gives us concerning different things or different people.

And then the fourth word is a word that means proclaimer or herald. Someone who proclaims something. Like in the olden days, the king would send a man with a trumpet, he'd blow something and say, the king has declared a holiday tomorrow.

Or the king is releasing all the prisoners from the jail. Or the king is coming by here tomorrow and he's going to meet with all the people. This is a herald, a proclaimer.

And that's another ministry a prophet has. To proclaim what God is doing in the world today. And that's another word that you find there in the Old Testament.

And then a fifth one is mouthpiece or spokesman. God says to Jeremiah, I will make you my mouth. That means a human being can actually be God's mouth.

It'll be God speaking through him and it says about Samuel that when he spoke like that none of his words fell to the ground. It's a wonderful thing to be able to speak in such a way that every word you speak goes straight to people's hearts. Nothing falls on the ground.

Those of you who are called to a preaching ministry should really long, brothers and sisters, remember prophecy is for the brothers and the sisters, sons and daughters. You must long. I don't mean standing in the pulpit alone.

You can prophesy when you're talking to one person alone. To speak God's word in such a way that not one word is wasted. If you long for this, the Bible says if you long for this gift of prophecy it can happen.

Then the sixth word, the prophets were watchmen. You know how a watchman watches the city and protects the people by warning, saying the enemy is coming? That is another ministry a prophet has. In a church, to warn people brothers and sisters, if you go this way this is what's going to happen.

This is what's wrong. Here the enemy is trying to attack you. This is a deception of the devil.

So many couples are being deceived. So many young people are being deceived. We need prophetic ministry like a watchman who watches over the souls of the people.

And lastly, the seventh word is shepherd. A watchman is a shepherd who takes care of the flock, who feeds them, instructs them, and we'll come to that more when we come into the New Testament. So, let me say in conclusion a prophet is something like a doctor.

When the church is sick, when you're sick, you need a doctor. When a church is sick, what it needs is not a teacher. What it needs is not an evangelist.

What it needs is not an apostle. What it needs is not a pastor, not a healer. It needs a prophet.

And the prophet will come and diagnose that sickness. That's what a doctor does first of all. This is the root cause of your problem.

And he doesn't leave him there. This is the cure for it. Of course, the doctor can't force people to take the cure, but he makes the diagnosis and gives them the cure.

Let me say, my dear brothers and sisters, the church in India and all the surrounding countries here have a tremendous need for such spiritual doctors. You must allow the Holy Spirit to sharpen your sensitiveness to God's voice. Keep yourself pure.

Listen to everything that God says to you and do it. And gradually your ears will become very sensitive to God's voice and He will give you an accurate diagnosis when you're counseling people personally. Like Jesus had a word according to the need of people.

He knew what to speak to Nicodemus. He knew what to speak to Zacchaeus. He knew what to speak to the woman of Samaria.

And He can make you like that. Because the same Holy Spirit that rested on Jesus can rest on us. So the gift of prophecy is not just something you exercise in the pulpit.

It can be in personal conversation. I want to encourage all of you. Covet long to prophesy.

Let's bow our heads before God. Heavenly Father, I think of the tremendous potential there is in this room. Hundreds of people who can make a tremendous difference in this land and surrounding lands for the Kingdom of God.

I pray that the devil will not lead them astray. I want to stand against all Satan's schemes and deceptions and bind his activities right now in Jesus name. And I pray these dear young people will get light and a burden in their heart concerning your call upon their life.

You've got to plan for their life. You want to pour out the spirit of prophecy on all of us. Not just 90%.

Every single one. Help us Lord to be open to it. More open than we have ever been before.

That we can serve you effectively in this land. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/UptX55LyKtM.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-truth-about-prophecy-introduction-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net