

# Prophecy

## The Prophets of the OT

### THE MEANING OF "PROPHECY" IN THE OT

(Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, 57-65; TDNT VI, 799-810)

Two different Hebrew words are used occasionally of a prophet; *roeh* (רֹאֶה - 12 X) and *hozeh* (חֹזֵה - 18 X). Each of these words give insight about the nature of prophecy. The two terms are participles that are nearly synonymous meaning "the one who sees" or in our English translations "a seer" (e.g. I Sam. 9:9-11).

A third designation is "man of God" (*ish elohim* אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים I Ki. 13; Moses- Deut. 33:1; Samuel - I Sam. 9:6; Elisha - I Ki. 4:9). The implication was that the person knew God and was sent by Him to on a mission.

The primary term for prophet is *nabbi* (נָבִיא) which is used nearly 300 times and is related to *naba* ("to prophesy" - נָבֵא) which appears approximately 300 more times .

To understand the meaning of *nabbi* (נָבִיא) some passages are of particular importance.

In Exodus 7:1 it says, "Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet (*nabbi* - נָבִיא)." The significance of this is understood when compared to Exodus 4:10-16 where it records Moses' refusal to be God's spokesman. There it says, <sup>14</sup> Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. <sup>15</sup> You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. <sup>16</sup> He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him." In Exodus 7:1 Aaron becomes Moses' prophet. The relationship between Moses and Aaron was analogous to the relationship

rev 2/13/14

between God and His spokesman (*nabbi* - נָבִיא). A prophet was the mouth of God (cf. Jer. 1:9 and 23:16; Ezek. 3:17), one who spoke in another's place.

Another key passage is Deuteronomy 18:15-22; <sup>18</sup> **I (God) will raise up for them (Israel) a prophet like you (Moses) from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.** <sup>19</sup> **If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."** Moses promises that God would raise up another prophet like himself. This person would be the source of information. God would put His words in the prophet's mouth. Christians associated this prediction with Messiah (Acts 3:22; 7:37).

These verses describe the basic idea of the word *nabbi* (נָבִיא) as "a speaker for God." (Wood, 62).

I Samuel 9:9 clarifies the relation of the terms *roeh* (רֹאֶה) and *nabbi* (נָבִיא). "Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, "Come, and let us go to the seer" (רֹאֶה *roeh*); for he who is called a prophet (נָבִיא *nabbi*) now was formerly called a seer (רֹאֶה *roeh*)." In the time of Samuel a man who spoke for God was called a seer, but the same individual was called a prophet in David's time. In other words, the popular usage of the term changed (Samuel was also called a *nabbi* (נָבִיא) in I Sam. 3:20; as was Moses in Deut. 18:15) but the function of the individual was the same. (Wood, 64).

The significant factor in OT prophesy is that the prophet was to pass the word of the Lord on (*debar YHWH* דְּבַר־יְהוָה - I Sam. 3:19; Jer. 1:9; Ezek. 3:1 ff.). The prophets used the common expression "Thus says the Lord" (*coħ amar YHWH* כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה - Exo. 4:22). The content of the message is primarily given in the first person singular.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Prophesy is the reception of a message from God through direct revelation, and the communication of that message to the people.

However, it should be noted that not all the prophets are depicted as receiving direct revelation themselves. Some simply passed on the message that they heard from other prophets (Wood, 17). This may have been especially true of the institutional prophets. One also need not conclude that every prophet received exact words from God; they may have received revelation in more general forms. However, when a prophetic message was recorded as Scripture we know that God superintended the prophet so that what was written was without error.

The prophets also functioned in other capacities besides speaking:

- 1) they were to test the people in terms of what was good or bad activity and conduct (Jer. 6:27).
- 2) they served as watchmen to point out error and warn of judgment (Ezek. 3:17; 33:7 ff.)
- 3) they were to be intercessors for the people (I Sam. 7:5, 8-9; 12:19; I Ki. 13:6; Amos 7:2; Jer. 14:17, 20-21)

### THE COMMUNICATION OF THE MESSAGE FROM GOD

#### **The context of prophesy:**

Prophets **especially came in times when social and religious reform was needed**. Prophets filled an emergency role; turning people who had wandered from God back to Him again.

The message of the prophets changed in different periods of history.

#### **The pre-monarchy prophets:**

The pre-monarchal prophets included:

Moses  
Miriam  
Joshua  
Deborah

The prophet in Gideon's day (Jdg. 6:8-10)  
Samuel (and a group of unnamed prophets -  
I Sam. 10:5-10; 19:18-20)

From the time of **Moses to Joshua**, God was establishing the people of Israel as a nation and defining His relationship to them. Therefore, the prophets' work at that time revolved around those themes.

In the historical period from **Joshua to Samuel** God had brought the people into the Promised Land, made them a nation, and had given them the law and the priesthood. Israel was to function as a true Theocracy with God as their ruler. However, Israel had failed in her obedience to God and was looked at as an easy target to plunder by the surrounding nations. Therefore, God established judges to serve as temporary intermediaries between Himself and the people. The prophets took on a role of preaching reform. The message of their day was to resist Canaanite influence (I Sam. 7:3) and was relative to the context of just having entered the Promised Land that was dominated with Canaanite influence.

**Samuel's day** was characterized by grievous sin. The oppression of outside nations earlier had not turned Israel from her sin. Instead there were indications that things were getting progressively worse. The people had turned to false gods of the nations (Jdg. 10:6). Sacrifices in the temple had been perverted (I Sam. 2:12-17, 22). There was also deep despair and low national morale. Israel was continuously oppressed by others (oppression by the Philistines lasted for 40 years -Jdg. 13:1). Lastly, the Israelites tended to unite forces with other nations when threatened by a common foe. Samuel's prophetic ministry was needed to take quick and decisive action to redirect the nation back to God.

### Monarchy prophets prior to the writing prophets:

20 different prophets are listed in this time period, including the well known prophets Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah (See Wood, 122-123)

The new monarchy did not get off to a good start under Saul. Samuel told Saul twice that he had been rejected for ruling (I Sam. 13:13, 14; 15:26). When David replaced Saul and the nation prospered. Two prophets of

rev 2/13/14

importance were Nathan and Gad who advised David and rebuked him for his sin.

Under later kings the prophets Zadok, Heman, Ahijah, a "man of God," and "an old prophet in Bethel" are mentioned.

### **The writing prophets:**

Ninth Century Prophets = Obadiah, Joel

Eighth Century Prophets = Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jonah

Seventh Century Prophets = Nahum, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk

Exilic Prophets = Daniel and Ezekiel

Post-Exilic Prophets = Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Each of the writing prophets' messages was related to the social and spiritual ills that existed in the nation at that time and the impending judgment that would follow if the people didn't repent.

### **Summary:**

The prophets' messages were related to the historical context in which they lived. They included issues related to social reform (II Sam. 12:1-14; II Sam. 24:10-14; I Ki. 21:17-26; II Chron 20:37), unfaithfulness to God (II Chron. 12:1-8; 15:1-8; 16:7-10; 24:17-21), false worship at Dan and Bethel (I Ki. 13:1-6; 11:9-38; 14:5-16; 16:1-12; 22:8-28), and the worship of false gods (I Ki. 11:29-38; II Chron. 25:15; II Ki. 3:9-14; 9:1-10; 10:19-28).

### **The recipients of prophesy:**

The individual prophets primarily spoke to the larger masses, however, since the life of the people was tied to the king, another important ministry of the prophets was to contact key individuals and urge them to conform to God's will.

Samuel went to Saul

Nathan went to David

Shemaiah went to Rehoboam

Ahijah went to Jeroboam

Elijah and Micaiah went to Ahab  
Elisha went to Jehoram and Jehu  
Azariah and Hanani went to Asa  
Jehu went to Jehosphat  
Zechariah went to Joash  
"the prophet" went to Amaziah  
Zechariah went to Uzziah  
Isaiah went to Ahaz and Hezekiah  
Jeremiah went to Jehoiakim and Zedekiah

### **The content of prophesy:**

The prophets' method of speaking can best be described as preaching (speaking to the heart, emotion and will with the desire to stir reaction) as distinct from teaching (speaking to the mind with the desire to impart information) (Wood, 67-68).

(see Wood 69-73 for methods of communication through object lessons and symbolic acts)

#### **1. The prophet's message was focused on turning people from sin to God and obedience to the law.**

The primary message of the prophets included both social and religious reform (e.g. the former prophets - I Sam. 3:1-18; 7:1-14; I Ki. 13:1-10; II Chron. 16:7-9; I Ki. 18; the later prophets - Amos 4:1; Isa. 10:1-2; Hos. 6:1; Mic. 6:1). The people of Israel already knew what was required of them; they just failed to obey it.

"The writing prophets worked at this task mainly by speaking to larger audiences and then recording their messages; the earlier prophets did it mainly by contacting single individuals. The prophets could not be innovators of new thought because what the people were to believe had already been revealed prior to entrance into the land." (Wood, 74)

#### **2. Prophets also predicted future events, though this was not their main task. The mention of future events was usually tied to the primary**

message of repentance but was given as a motivation to abandon sinful practices, to encourage endurance, or to give hope.

3. Prophets also **received revelation even in an ideal state order to prevent the people from turning to divination** (Deut 18:10-15). Prophets were also approached by individuals to know God's will (I Sam. 28: 6; 28:6; I Ki. 14:2; 22:5, 7; II Ki. 3:11; 22:13), but on more occasions than not the prophets' appearances were unsolicited.

### THE PROPHETS' RECEPTION OF THEIR MESSAGE FROM GOD

#### The Holy Spirit and prophecy:

It has been observed that the OT indicates that the Holy Spirit comes upon people at times and sometimes leaves them. This is not indicative of being saved or the loss of salvation but is related to empowerment (e.g. Jdg. 14:6; II Chron. 24:20). This same sense of empowerment was experienced by the prophets (Neh. 9:30; Zech. 7:12). Ezekiel was aware of the Spirit's work at different times (Ezek. 2:2; 3:12, 14). But there is some evidence that such prophets as Elijah and Elisha were empowered continually. Likewise, in Micah 3:8 it says "the Spirit of the Lord came upon me." Micah uses the perfect tense verb to indicate that the filling came at a time in the past and was still with him as he wrote.

Wood makes 3 observations when investigating the nature of divine contact with the prophets (p. 95 ff.).

1. There was never any indication of initiating the reception of revelation. God did the initiating (contrast the Urim and Thummim) (cf. I Sam. 3:4-14; Jer. 28:11, 12 as examples). Although prophets did pray for revelation at times, God still controlled the answer to such a request.

2. There was no indication of the loss of rational power. Moses could think very clearly and was able to give reasons why he could not respond to God's call (Exo. 3:4). Isaiah saw his own unworthiness when he saw a vision of God in the temple (Isa. 6:1-8). (see Wood's response to those who claim that the prophets were often in a state of ecstasy or madness - 39-56 / Contra TDNT VI, 797)

3. The reception of revelation was more than a rational experience. "Reason was suspended, while it still retained its natural power. There was contact with the divine without the negation of the human. The human mind was enabled to transcend its own finite limitations and come away from the moment knowing more than it did before." (Wood, 97)

This extra factor in receiving revelation was the work of the Holy Spirit (I Pet. 1:20-21).

God also communicated through DREAMS, VISIONS, and THEOPHANIES.

1) dream - the recipient is in a passive unconscious state, with the revelation being a noncorporeal mental image

2) theophany - the recipient was active and conscious and the one revealing possessed a corporeal body

3) vision - the recipient was active and conscious but the thing visualized was a noncorporeal mental image

### THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PROPHET AND THE PRIEST

The priests' work was primarily intercessory, offering sacrifices on behalf of the people in order to make them acceptable to God. However, it was also the priests' responsibility to teach the people about the law that was given on Sinai (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10; Isa. 28:13). They addressed the minds of the people telling them what they should know. The law was revealed but it would not benefit the nation if it was not understood.

The prophets on the other hand exhorted people to obey the law. They spoke to the will, heart, and emotion of the people urging them to do what they had already learned (Wood, 17). The work of prophets as reformers presupposed the work of priests as instructors (Wood, 117). [There were some areas of instruction that the prophets taught that were not in the law - such as predictive matters warning of punishment or future exaltation including the coming of Messiah]

Both prophets and priests received revelation from God. The High Priest did this by means of the Urim and Thummin. The prophets could not

initiate revelation but had to wait for it. The revelation that they received, however, was more extensive than that that the priest received.

### FALSE and TRUE PROPHECY IN THE OT

1. False prophets catered to the delights and desires of the people (Jer. 8:11; cf. Ezek. 13:10, contrast the true prophet - Jer. 28:8)

2. False prophets were often of questionable moral character (Mic. 3:1, 5 - they would prophesy good for those who paid, but not for those who didn't)

3. True prophets were willing to suffer for their message (Micaiah in I Ki. 22:1-28; Jeremiah)

4. The message of a true prophet harmonized with the law of God and the messages of other true prophets (Deut. 13:2-6). The law had been in existence since the time of Moses and as prophecy was proven true over time a body of information was developed in the minds of the people. Such information could be used as a criterion for later prophets (Jer. 26:17-19).

5. The fulfillment of predictive prophecy was another mark of a true prophet (Deut. 18:21-22). Jeremiah said that Israel would be in exile for 70 years (Jer. 25:11, 12 - cf Dan. 9:2) while the false prophet Hananiah predicted that the people would return in two (Jer. 28:2-4). Jeremiah's words came true.

6. True prophets sometimes authenticated their claims by performing a miracle (Moses, Exo. 4:1-9; I Sam. 12:16f.).

7. People who had spiritual discernment could recognize a true prophet. (I Cor. 2:14).

#### ***Unresolved problems / things to think about:***

Many of these tests are subjective.

1) Sincere believers can be deceived.

2) Depraved moral condition may not be immediately apparent.

3) Surely there were some false prophets who sincerely believed they had received revelation from God and were willing to suffer for their message. Sincere people suffer for the wrong things all the time.

In I Kings 22 Ahab consults the prophets before his campaign (5, 7). One of them claims to speak for God (11 - "Thus says the Lord") and predicts success (12). In verse 24 the prophet believed that the Spirit of the Lord was the source of his prophesy. All the prophets "confirmed" what each other had said. There was unanimity in the content of their "revelation" but it turned out that they had all fallen victim to a spirit of deception (28, 34-38).

4) Things said could harmonize with the law but the words spoken may have come from their own minds instead of God.

The prophets who did not represent YHWH spoke in the same way as the prophets who did (Jer. 14:13 ff.). Even Jeremiah yielded to his opponent until he got a word from YHWH himself (Jer. 28). This introduces another problem. Hananiah proclaimed the message of salvation that Isaiah had proclaimed 100 years earlier (although it was misapplied) while Jeremiah's message had no tradition to back it. In other words, Hananiah's words could be supported in "scripture" while Jeremiah's couldn't be. Yet Hananiah was the false prophet.

In the same way, the people who are trying to test what someone says could misunderstand the Scripture (cf John 7:40-43; 9:16 where some are trying to examine Jesus' works based on Scripture, but their conclusions are wrong).

5) A false prediction may outlive the prophet which would make it impossible to know if their prediction was from God or not. Even false prophets have made predictions that come true (50/50 chance). A prediction that comes true is not conclusive evidence that the prophet was from God.

6) False prophets also perform miracles (Exo. 7:11, 12; Deut. 13:1-3; Mk. 13:22; II Thess. 2:9) so a miracle in itself was not conclusive evidence of authenticity. False wonders could be misinterpreted as coming from God (Matt. 24:11, 24, 25).

In spite of all of these "problems" the testing procedure God expected His people to discern true and false prophecy.

We can see in hindsight that the prophets of old were truly prophets for the nature of their predictions (the detail and accuracy with which they were fulfilled) could have only been given them by God. In fact, the need for those who reject the supernatural element of prophecy to date the prophet's predictions after the event is proof at just how incredibly detailed and accurate the prophecies were.

The question still remains as to how to balance blind credulity and faith?

Verses to think about:

**1 Samuel 3:19** Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail.

**1 Samuel 3:20** And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD.

### THE NUMBER OF OT PROPHETS

In the OT prophets are portrayed as both groups of prophets (I Sam. 10:5, 11-12; 19:20, 24; I Ki. 18:4, 20:35; 22:6-17, 22, 23; II Ki. 2:3f.; 4:38; etc.) and as individuals who are in no way tied to them. At times a group appears to be part of the national institution; at times they appear to be independent groups.

#### *Evidence of groups of prophets:*

Samuel appeared to be part of a larger group in Ramah (I Sam. 19:18-24).

Elijah was the only survivor of the prophets of the Lord who Jezebel had killed (I Ki. 18:22; 19:10, 14).

Elisha seems to be the head of a group of prophets (II Ki. 2-9) that were located in different places (Bethel, Jericho- II Ki. 2:2-7; 4:38 Gilgal). They had a common place of meeting (II Ki. 4:38; 6:1); though in II Ki. 4:1 one is married and has his own house. They shared common meals (II Ki. 4:38 ff. 42 ff). They had a modest lifestyle (II Ki. 4:1, 38, 42, 6:5 [an axe is borrowed])

Jeremiah 29:26 mentions that the priests were called to oversee those who prophesy.

**After the exile** a group of prophets (plural) was still in existence but it is difficult to know how these groups functioned.

I Chron 16:22; 17:1; II Chron. 18; 20:20; 32:20; 34:22; 36:16; Ezra 9:11.  
Neh. 6:7, 14; 9: 26, 30, 32.

There were many more prophets in Israel than were ever listed and some were only known for what they said and little more:

Gad - I Sam. 22:5; II Sam. 24:11-13

Jehu - I Ki. 16:1-4, 7, 12

Jonah - II Ki. 14:25

The Huldah - II Ki. 22:14-20

An anonymous prophet - I Ki. 20:13, 22, 28

These were speaking, not writing prophets (though the content of what they said is occasionally recorded I Ki. 20:42, II Ki. 9:3, 6, 12).

In relation to the writing prophets Wood comments "The Scriptures claim for themselves to have been supernaturally inspired to the point of infallibility, even in the words, and it is doubtful that that was true of oral messages. The prophets were empowered for giving the oral messages to insure that they were accurate and authoritative, but to say that every

single word was infallibly inspired is more than the Scriptures claim. The written Word, however, was a product fully without error." (Wood, 94).

***The use of nabbi (נָבִיא) in the writing prophets is mostly polemical.***

Jeremiah refers to the false prophets in his day regularly:

1. They speak falsely - 5:13; 6:13, etc.
2. They speak in the name of the Lord though He has not sent them - 14:14 f.; 23:21, 32; 27:15; 28:15; 29:9, 31
3. Their words are from their own hearts -14:14; 23:16, 26
4. They proclaim peace when there is none -6:13f; 8:19f, etc.

Lamentations 2:14, 20 speak of the prophets and priests that are slain in the sanctuary because they didn't bring the true message to the people. In Daniel 9:6, 10 the prophets are called *God's servants* (Are they members of the same group?).

Also Hosea 4:5; Mic. 3:5-7.

Jer. 2:26; 4:9; 8:1; 13:13 lists priest, prophets and leaders together suggesting that they were part of the institutionalized national system that had gone corrupt. Isa. 3:2; 9:14; 29:10; Jer. 27:9 lists the prophets with governmental officials but not the priests.

***Unresolved problems:***

It is not really known if institutionalized prophets existed, though there is a real possibility for it.

## The Prophets of the NT

In the LXX προφήτης (*prophetes*) always translates *nabbi* (נָבִי). There is not a single instance of any other word being used (TDNT, VI, 812). In Chronicles the participle ὁ βλέπων (I Chron. 9:22; 29:29), ὁ ὄρων (I Chron 21:9; II Chron. 9:29; 12:5; 29:25; 33:18, 19) and ὁ ἀνακρουόμενος (I Chron 25:5) is used for *roeh* (רָאָה) and *hozeh* (הִזִּיחַ) (TDNT, VI, 812).

NT prophecy is described by Paul in I Corinthians 14:3 as that which is for "strengthening, encouragement, and comfort." This, however, does not define prophecy, for biblical exposition, prayer, and teaching could also serve the same ends (Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 91) but it does indicate the results it produced.

Grudem (summarized in Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 94 ff.) distinguishes OT and NT prophecy in the following ways:

- 1) Prophecy presupposes revelation, but NT prophecy is not necessarily in the form of a direct quotation from God. The quotes in the NT that begin "Thus saith the Lord" are highly disputed and the vast majority of times are clearly a reference to an OT passage not a NT prophet receiving revelation from God.
- 2) Those who have authority and status in the NT comparable to the OT prophet are not the NT prophets, but the apostles.

"Once a prophet was tested and approved in the OT, God's people were morally bound to obey him. To disobey such a prophet was to oppose God. If a prophet speaking in the name of God was shown to be in error, the official sanction was death. But once a prophet is acknowledged as true, there is no trace of repeated checks on the *contents* of his oracles. By contrast NT prophets are to have their oracles carefully weighed (I Cor. 14:29; so also I Thess. 5:19-21). The word διακρίνω (*diakrino*) suggests that a prophecy be *evaluated*, not simply accepted as totally true or totally false. 'The presupposition is that any one NT prophetic oracle is expected to be *mixed* in quality, and the wheat must be separated from the chaff.' Moreover, there is no hint of excommunication as the threatened sanction if the prophecy occasionally doesn't live up to the mark. More importantly, Paul

places the authority of Christian prophets under his own (I Cor. 14:37-38); and to contravene apostolic authority may eventually bring enormous threat (I Cor. 4:21; II Cor. 10:11; 13:1-10; I Tim. 1:20)" (Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 94-95).

- 3) The NT does not see the prophet as replacing the apostle when the apostolic era ended (all the apostles died). If the NT gift was the same as OT prophecy then one would expect prophets to be the source of revelation and light to the church. Instead the Bible says:

2 Timothy 1:13 " *What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*"

Jude 1:3 " . . . contend *for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.*"

1 John 1:1 " *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.*"

One must conclude that either the prophets died with the apostles (which the NT never suggests) or that they did not share the authority that the apostles did.

- 4) That the NT prophets never enjoyed the authority of the OT prophets is also evidenced in other ways in the NT. The Thessalonians had to be told not to treat prophecy with contempt (I Thess. 5:20) and in Corinthians Paul had to do all he could to advance the gift of prophecy over tongues (I Cor. 13:9; 14:6; Rev. 1:3). The implication is that at times prophecy was held in contempt and was looked upon as being lesser value than tongues.
- 5) There are instances of prophecy thought to be genuinely from God but of much less authority than "Thus saith the Lord." In Acts 21:4 there were certain disciples who told Paul not to go up to Jerusalem "by the Spirit" (which is almost certainly an expression used of prophecy, cf. Acts 11:28). But Paul goes anyway, believing

that the Spirit was prompting him to do so. Likewise the prophecy of Agabus (Acts 21:10-11) is only accurate in a limited sense. He predicted that the Jews would deliver Paul over to the Gentiles with hands and feet bound. But strictly speaking Paul was bound by the Romans not the Jews and the Jews did not hand Paul over but sought to kill him. This is unlike the OT prophets who did not have such inaccuracy on the details.

- 6) The constraints placed on prophecy in I Corinthians 14:29, 30, 36 show that it is unlike the OT prophets as well. Women were allowed to prophecy (I Cor. 11:5) in the presence of men, but not teach (I Tim. 2:11 ff) or evaluate the content of prophecies (I Cor. 14:33b - 36).

These are also some of the reasons why many see NT prophecy as tantamount to healthy preaching or teaching that is applied pastorally or applied in the context of people's own life situation in order to help them (Thiselton, NIGTC, I Cor., 1084).

These conclusions however, are a little oversimplified.

- 1) OT prophets did not always speak in verbatim quotes either. The doctrine of inspiration states that God superintends the human authors so that what is recorded is without error. This does not mean that God dictated a text to the OT writing prophets or that a prophet did not receive revelation from God in general conceptions. What it means is that *when it was recorded* it was directed by God so that no errors entered into the text.
- 2) The school of the prophets in the OT also appear and at times do pretty mundane things.

### ***Questions / comments:***

- 1) Calling into question claims of miraculous events, hearing God's voice, or the like isn't a matter of limiting or doubting God, it's a question if God has acted in the manner claimed. If God *didn't* do something, no one is limiting Him. He is acting freely in accordance with His will not to act. God is not

obligated to do the same things in every age in the same way. In fact, there is ample evidence to show that He doesn't.

2) Prophecy as it has been described here does not threaten the NT canon. God claims to reveal numerous things to believers (Matt. 11:27; I Cor. 2:10 - the Son; Phil. 3:15 other truth; Eph. 1:17) but no one assumes that they are received infallibly. God can reveal things to people but what the people "hear" may be clouded by their own minds. In the same way, NT prophecy may be Spirit prompted but not necessarily authoritative, infallible, or considered part of the canon. The prophecies should be considered as to their content and submit to apostolic authority and the gospel. However, because error can enter, the authoritative status of NT prophecy is lost.

#### CONCLUSION:

"In common church life, it [prophecy] was recognized to be Spirit-prompted utterance, but with no guarantee of divine authority in every detail, and therefore not only in need of evaluation (1 Corinthians 14:29) but necessarily inferior in authority to the deposit of truth represented by the Apostle Paul (14:37-38).<sup>49</sup> In certain respects, then, it is perfectly proper for Paul to elevate teaching above prophecy, especially if the teaching is considered part of the non-negotiable apostolic deposit that serves in part as one of the touchstones enabling the congregation to weigh the prophecies that are granted to the church, and especially if the prophecies themselves, unlike the apostolic deposit, are subject to ecclesiastical appraisal. It does not mean, of course, that the utterances of any particular teacher need not be verified; I am not saying that prophecy must be evaluated, but teaching need not be. The New Testament includes too many passages that encourage the church to take responsibility for evaluating teachers and teaching (1 Timothy 1:3; 6:3-5; Titus 1:9-14; Hebrews 13:9; 2 Peter 2:1, etc.). But it does mean that prophecy cannot escape such evaluation, and it presupposes that there is a deposit of apostolic teaching, a given content, that is non-negotiable and that can serve as the criterion both of further teaching and of prophecy." (D. A. Carson, "Silent In The Churches": On The Role Of Women In 1 Corinthians 14:33B-36)

**For further Study:**

rev 2/13/14

1. Thiselton, NIGTC, I Cor., 956-965; 1087-1094
2. O'Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians (Pillar NT Commentary), 214-216