

Prophecy and Visions According to the Word of God

First of all, let's look at the ways in which God speaks to us today, as Believers under the New Covenant. We have **the complete written word of God**, and we are in a different dispensation than the Old Testament prophets, so God speaks to us differently than He did to them (Hebrews 1:1-2). Today, in the dispensation of the CHURCH AGE, God speaks to us through (1.) His written word, (2.) the Holy Spirit, (3.) other Christians, and (4.) through circumstances. Sometimes, **under extreme circumstances**, He may speak through His angels (see Acts 27:23-25), or by visions and dreams, but **don't get off track** by sitting around waiting for God to send you an angel, or a vision, or a dream.

GOD'S WORD - II Timothy 3:16 tells us that the word of God is "profitable" or USEFUL to correct us, teach us, and show us the way of righteousness. This is the primary way God speaks to us. It is vitally important that we STUDY God's word and read it with an attitude of EXPECTING Him to speak to us through it.

- **II Timothy 2:15** "STUDY to show yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately **the WORD of truth**."
- **Psalms 119:105** "**Your WORD** is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."
- **II Timothy 3:16-17** "All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

THE HOLY SPIRIT - Rev. 2:17; Rev. 3:6; Romans 8:16. The Holy Spirit DOES NOT speak to Christians in an AUDIBLE voice from outside. **He impresses on OUR mind or spirit** what He wants us to do, because He is living inside us, and He is always in agreement with the written word, because He wrote it! The Holy Spirit may speak to unbelievers in an audible voice, when He is working on them to bring them to faith in Jesus, because He is not yet dwelling in them. Beware of audible voices, however, because DEMONS can speak to people to deceive and mislead them.

OTHER CHRISTIANS - Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 11:14. **GODLY counsel**, and a multitude of counselors with many spiritual gifts (wisdom, teaching, exhortation) may be used by God to direct us. There is **a gift of prophecy** given to the church, but beware of those who come up to you and tell you "God told me to tell you to do such-and-such." Check their "prophecies" against the word, other Christians, and just common sense. Some people are **puffed up with PRIDE** and their own conceit, feeling very SELF IMPORTANT by giving so-called messages and prophecies to others. Many Christians have had their lives almost ruined by these FALSE PROPHETS.

CIRCUMSTANCES - Rev. 3:8; I Cor. 16:9. Sometimes we refer to this as looking for the OPEN DOORS and CLOSED DOORS. When you pray for two things, and either one **could be** God's will for you, ask Him to close the doors to whatever He DOESN'T want you to do. You cannot use this method for anything that is ALREADY prohibited in God's word, or where we are ALREADY given instructions on how to handle a certain situation.

How can we know when we've heard from God? Again, be sure the advice is CONSISTENT with the word of God. God will give His peace (Colossians 3:15), and He is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). If you don't have peace, and are still confused, **you have not heard**

from God! Sometimes, we are too busy to hear from God (see Psalm 46:10). Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice" (John 10:27; Rev. 3:20).

So what is the "gift of prophecy" and how does it fit into the life of the church? **The gift of prophecy** is a valid gift of the Holy Spirit for both men and women (I Corinthians 12:10, & 28-29, Ephesians 4:11-12, Romans 12:6, I Corinthians 14:1-5, 24-25, 29-31). As with all gifts, they are distributed to each Believer as the Holy Spirit wills (I Cor. 12:11).

- **Acts 2:17-18** "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your **sons and your daughters shall prophesy**, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My menservants and on **My maidservants** I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and **they shall prophesy.**"
- **Acts 21:8-9** ".....and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied."

PURPOSE - The purpose, or correct USE of **the gift of prophecy is for "edification of the church"** , not for personal messages. Edification means "building up." I Cor. 14:3 also says it is for "exhortation and consolation," which means encouragement, strengthening, and comfort. The gift of prophecy is "the special ability that God the Holy Spirit gives to certain members of the body of Christ **to reveal God's truth** and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance, or edification. It may or may not pertain to future events." In the Scriptures below, the gift of prophecy seems to be the same as **inspired preaching**, with the congregation judging and checking it out by the written word of God. The Holy Spirit is able to apply what is being preached in a sermon to individual lives and hearts, even though the one speaking does not know in advance what to preach about, or what issues need to be addressed. There are situations, such as mentioned in I Cor. 14:24-25, where people will think the speaker has been "reading their mail" so to speak, because of the way they preach the word directly to the issues in their lives.

- **Ephesians 4:11-12** "And He gave some as apostles, and **some as prophets**, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, **for the building up of the body of Christ.**"
- **I Corinthians 14:3** "But **one who prophesies speaks to men for EDIFICATION** and exhortation and consolation."
- **Acts 15:30-32** "...and having **gathered the congregation together**, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. And Judas and Silas, also being **prophets** themselves, **encouraged and strengthened** the brethren with a **lengthy message** (sermon)."
- **I Corinthians 14:29-31** "And let two or three **prophets** speak, and let the others pass judgment..... For you can all **prophesy** one by one, **so that ALL may learn and ALL may be exhorted.**"
- **Acts 17:11** "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for **they received the word** with great eagerness, **examining the Scriptures** daily, to see whether these things were so."
- **I Corinthians 14:24-25** "But if all **prophesy (preach)** , and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; **the secrets of his heart are revealed**; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you."

EXAMPLES of the gift of prophecy in the word of God - Notice, the Holy Spirit gave the same message to several prophets, and they fasted and prayed as a GROUP, and then sent out missionaries. I Corinthians 12:7 says that **ALL spiritual gifts** are for the purpose of "**the common good**" of the church. In Paul's case, even though it was a personal message to him about suffering that he would have to go through, it was all pertaining to the work of the kingdom of God, not Paul's personal life. When Agabus prophesied about the great famine, it was so that **the church as a whole** could be warned, in order to prepare for it, and to send

relief to the church in Jerusalem. I just don't see the gift of prophecy being used in the Bible for peoples' selfish, personal, worldly concerns such as "who should I marry?" or "what career moves should I make?" and so forth. That doesn't mean God isn't concerned about those issues in your life, but those things should be a matter of **PRAYER and trusting God** - that's NOT why He put prophets in the church.

- **Acts 13:1-4** "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, **prophets** and teachers; Barnabas, and Simeon....., and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen....., and Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."
- **Acts 20:22-23** "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that **the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city**, saying that bonds and afflictions await me."
- **Acts 21:10-11** ".....a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, 'This is what **the Holy Spirit says**: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"
- **Acts 11:27-29** "Now at this time **some prophets** came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and began **to indicate by the Spirit** that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world.....and in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea."

EXAMPLES of VISIONS and DREAMS - These are ALL related to the spreading of the gospel and the work of the kingdom of God. Even the personal messages or visions to Paul, Peter, and Cornelius were directly related to **the preaching of the gospel**, or their protection while doing it, etc. (see Acts 9:10-12). I do not see in the word of God that the purpose of visions and dreams is for our own personal careers, marriage plans, financial success, or whatever.

- **Acts 18:9-10** "And the Lord said to Paul in the night **by a vision**, 'Do not be afraid any longer, but **go on speaking** and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.'"
- **Acts 10:1-22** "Now there was a certain man at Caesarea named Cornelius.....about the ninth hour of the day **he clearly saw in a vision** an angel of God who had just come in to him, and said.....'Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send some men to Joppa, and send for a man named Simon, who is called Peter....' ".....Peter went up on the housetop to about the sixth hour to pray..... he fell into a trance; and he beheld the sky opened up, and a certain object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground..... Now while Peter was perplexed in mind as to what **the vision** which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate.....and while **Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him**, 'Behold, three men are looking for you.....And they said, 'Cornelius.....was **divinely directed by a holy angel** to send for you to come to his house and **HEAR a MESSAGE from you.**'"
- **Acts 16:9** "And **a vision** appeared to Paul in the night: a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'"

WARNING!!!! - Sign of the End Times - "Itching Ears"

Too many Christians these days are running to and fro with **itching ears**, wanting to hear a prophecy from someone, rather than study the word of God to find the answer to their problem. This is one of the **signs that we are in the last days**, or end times, before Jesus returns. Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke

18:8). Paul warned Timothy that it was already happening, and that it would get worse as we get closer and closer to the Second Coming of Jesus.

- **II Timothy 4:2-4** "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. **For the time will come** when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have **itching ears**, they will heap up for themselves teachers: and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."
- **Luke 18:1 & 8** "Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times **they ought to PRAY and not to lose heart** (get discouraged.)" "I tell you that He will bring justice for them speedily. However, **when the Son of Man comes**, will He find faith on the earth?"

What does it mean to have "itching ears"? Paul tells Timothy that these people "**will not endure sound doctrine**", which means they don't want to hear what the Bible says, they want a "better" answer. It also means they want a "quicker" answer, because the word "endure" means to "continue, to remain firm, to bear with" something. Then, he says "according to **their own desires**" they will seek out and follow after teachers who will **tell them what they WANT to hear**. That's what it means to have "**itching ears**". Many in the churches today are seeking a "prophetic word" that will make them feel better, or give them an answer more in line with **what they already want to do**. Instead of being helped by these prophecies they receive, they usually end up worse off than they were before. God's promises in His word may not always come to pass **on our time schedule**, but it is so much better **to WAIT for God's BEST**, than to HURRY UP and receive Satan's "consolation prize." In the Old Testament, in Numbers, chapters 22-24, we see Balak going to the "prophet" Balaam over and over again, trying to get another answer than the one God first gave them. Finally, God had to speak to Balaam through the mouth of a donkey in order to get him to stop. There is a warning for us there as well: **ACCEPT God's answer from His word**, or else YOU may end up getting an answer that makes you look and feel like a donkey!

- **II Thessalonians 2:3** "Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day** will not come unless **the falling away** (apostasy) comes first..."
- **I Timothy 4:1** "Now the Spirit expressly says that **in the LAST DAYS** some will DEPART from the FAITH, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines (teachings) of DEMONS; speaking LIES in hypocrisy..."
- **II Timothy 3:1-5** "But realize this, that **in the LAST DAYS** difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to **a form of godliness** (false Christianity), although they have denied its power; and **AVOID such men as these**."
- **Jude 12-13 & 16-19** "These men are those who are **hidden reefs** in your love-feasts (church potluck dinners) when they feast with you without fear, **caring for themselves (selfish)** ; clouds without water, carried along by winds..... wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever." "These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts, **they speak arrogantly, flattering people** for the sake of gaining an advantage. But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they were saying to you, '**In the LAST DAYS there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts**'. These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit...."
- **Revelation 2:20** "Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman, Jezebel, **who calls herself a PROPHETESS, to teach and beguile My servants** to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols."
- **Revelation 2:14** "But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block

before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality (fornication)."

These verses tell us that there will be a falling away from the True Faith in the end times, and they indicate that **false prophets and prophetesses** are IN the CHURCH, as well as outside the church in false cults and religions. We must be very careful NOT to get caught up in running to this or that "prophet" or "prophetess" for advice and answers. God has given us His word, and **He has told us to PRAY and not "lose heart"** or give up too soon.

Because **many Christians want a "quick fix" answer to their situations**, they are not willing to study God's word, and to pray and **wait upon the Lord** for the answer. They go instead to people within the church who will **give them "a word"** about their particular situation. This becomes no better than going to psychics and fortunetellers! These false prophets and prophetesses give "flattering words" to "deceive the hearts of the simple," they put "stumbling blocks" before God's people, cause divisions in the church, and eventually cause God's people to commit acts of immorality."

- **Romans 16:17-18** "Now I urge you brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and **avoid them**. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own fleshly appetites, and **by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.**"

This is a true story of a young woman in our "Love Lifted Me Recovery" group, who prefers not to give her name: she says, "People would go to these different types of "prophecy churches" to get a specific word from the Lord. It reminds me of **people that go to a PSYCHIC to get some type of word of direction** from some power in the universe. I was so steeped in it that I actually had a notebook of "prophetic words" I received, and I used to read them over and over again. I do not have the notebook any longer, I threw it away. I have seen **the wreckage it causes** and has caused in my life. I have belonged to churches that call themselves "prophecy churches" and I even went to their "prophecy classes" to learn how to prophesy. I have also participated in speaking "words" to others, which hurt people. It's almost like channeling - uttering things you hear the "voices" saying. I repented a long time ago for participating in that stuff. It happens on TBN all the time, so called prophets and prophetesses speaking "words" to the church. It gets people to **leave the written word of God behind and start living by these "words"** . And also it reminded me of the "Toronto Blessing" where I was in a church meeting where people were making animal noises and acting like they were "drunk in the Holy Ghost," crawling around on the floor with the lights turned off, and also giving prophetic words to people, making them think they were going to be some important prophet or messenger for the Lord, and giving them direction for their lives. **It was ALL based on PRIDE and self-importance**. Also there were people who flew to Toronto to receive a so-called impartation of what they thought was the Holy Spirit, but was NOT. They would come back and organize prayer meetings in order to lay their hands on others to "impart" this "Special Anointing" so they thought, to others. These people who got these "prophetic words" acted like they were some special person for God, and were full of pride - it was really sick. I was caught up in it for a while, but I am very thankful God rescued me and is teaching me the importance of what He has said in His word alone. God does not speak to us by some wanna-be, deceived, self proclaimed prophet or prophetess. These people are the false prophets the Bible warns us about."

- **Ezekiel 13:3 & 6-7 & 17** "Thus says the Lord God, 'Woe to the **foolish prophets who are following their own spirit** and have seen nothing.'" "They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, 'The Lord declares,' when **the Lord has NOT sent them**; yet they hope for the fulfillment of their word. **Did you see a FALSE VISION** and speak a lying divination when you said, 'The Lord declares,' but it is not I who have spoken?" "Now you, son of man, set your face **against the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their own inspiration**. Prophecy against them."

- **Colossians 2:18** "Let no one keep defrauding (cheating) you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, **taking his stand on VISIONS he has seen**, inflated (puffed up with pride) without cause by his **fleshly mind**."

As John Wesley advised, "Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions or revelations to be from God. They may be from Him. They may be from nature (your own flesh). They may be from the devil. Therefore, do not believe every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are from God."

- **I Corinthians 14:33 & 40** "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." "Let all things be done decently and in order."