

A Look at Prophecy

The Holy Spirit Today

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Well, in our singing this morning we have rightly focused on the Incarnation of the second person of the Godhead, our Lord Jesus. We are grateful that our great God has sent a Savior into the world, a Savior able to save us to the uttermost, a Savior who lived a perfect life of righteousness, who offered his life a perfect atonement for sin for everyone who would believe in him. But those who trust in him, have that righteousness counted to their account before God. It is the only righteousness which God accepts, the righteousness of his own Son, and we receive that as a gift by faith. It is not something that we earn. We don't present to God our own righteousness. We don't present to him things that we have done as if that would be acceptable to him because as our brother Dane made clear in his opening remarks, everything that we do is tainted with sin. The best of our works are filthy rags, Scripture says, and so we are grateful that God in his wisdom planned to send the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners among whom we are foremost. So that is what we have sung about and what we have remembered with great gratitude today. For those of you who are not in Christ, I invite you to this all-sufficient Savior who alone is able to deliver you from the tyranny and the penalty of sin that you might repent and put your faith in him.

That's what we've been singing about. We pivot a bit as we come to our time together in God's word as we open God's word together because for the past couple of months, for those of you that maybe are visiting, haven't been with us for quite a while, we have been looking at the work of the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, in a lengthy series that we've titled "The Holy Spirit Today," and we come to the next-to-the-last message in that series. I'll finish this series up next week and we have some special things planned for next week that I'm excited about that we'll announce another time, but you'll want to be with us for sure.

What we've done in this series is that we've looked at the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, we've looked at the issue of miraculous gifts, and the role that the apostles play in our understanding of those miraculous gifts. We saw that the office, the gift of apostles has ceased, it's finished, it's over with, and that the signs and wonders that attended the ministry of the apostles and that authenticated the ministry of the apostles, therefore, have also ceased. But we realize that in our modern day in the church today, that there is still an emphasis in some circles that asserts those miraculous gifts continue in one way or another: healings and tongues, and as we're going to look at today, prophecy. So what we

have tried to do is we've tried to take an overview look at those individual gifts of healings, tongues, coming to prophecy today, and seeing why we believe that Scriptures clearly teach us that those gifts have ceased and we've tried to deal with and tried to address what it is we see going on in charismatic circles when they claim healings, when they claim to speak or to pray in tongues, and we realize that the things that they are doing and ascribing the biblical term to, do not match the reality of the biblical gift. You can talk about having the gift of healing but when your gift of healing does not include immediate instantaneous healing in a visible way of people with organic deformities, your gift is not the biblical gift. You're offering a cheap counterfeit to those who understand Scripture. We looked at the gift of tongues. We saw that it was the ability to speak fluently a known human language that you had never studied before, and no one is doing that today. They offer a cheap substitute of babble, of perhaps a private prayer language that doesn't at all match or resemble anything that is described in the biblical gift in Acts 2, Acts 10, Acts 19. You definitely see a pattern developing when you look at these things individually and you say, "This is not what the Bible describes. You're using biblical terms to describe something that is a different thing than what Scripture is talking about. Something's up here. Something doesn't pass the smell test when you look at it carefully."

One of the things that we've also tried to do is to give in conjunction with these messages, to give an individual kind of pastoral message that accompanies these. When we talked about healing, we addressed in a separate message, "Well, what do you do when the healing doesn't come?" What happens when the healing doesn't come, and to address the hope that we find in Christ even when physical healing is not granted to us. In tongues, we addressed the issue, should we pray in tongues, and we saw that the answer to that was clearly no. Jesus spoke clearly about what private prayer should look like in Matthew 6 and he specifically said, "Do not use meaningless words. Do not use meaningless repetition but instead pray this way, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done as in heaven, so also upon earth. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." What we see when we examine the way that Jesus taught us to pray in private is that it's very very rich theologically, it requires great cognitive attention as you pray upon those lines of the great themes of the will and kingdom of God, and express your physical and spiritual dependence upon him. That's what real private prayer is, not this hidden language that's supposedly only given to a few.

Today we come to our third and final aspect of dealing with signs and wonders as we take a look at prophecy. As we take a look at prophecy and what we want to do today is to examine the gift of prophecy in light of Scripture and we're going to follow the same pattern that we have in these prior messages. We looked at the nature of healing and the nature of tongues and then we looked at the biblical limitations on them, the things that would restrict and guide our understanding of them. We're going to follow that exact same pattern as we look at prophecy.

Now, you cannot properly talk about prophecy at all here in the church age with a completed canon until you have dealt with the doctrine of Sola Scriptura and we have out on the circle table in our main lobby CD copies of a message I preached a few weeks ago called "Sola Scriptura," but if you weren't here for that message, I encourage you to pick it up because it informs the things that I'm going to say today. Having just recently preached that, I don't feel the need to repeat it all here but I can repeat for you paragraph 1.6 of the Confession that we use in our church as a summary fashion, the 1689 Baptist Confession which mirrors what is said in the Westminster Confession from a few years prior to that. What do we believe about Scripture? This is foundational, beloved. This is where we find authority for what we believed and what we practice. There is, in some ways, there is no more foundational issue than this because we ask the question where do we go to find the truth? Where do we go to find where God has really and truly spoken in a way that we do not have to question? Whose word can we trust, in other words? And the Confession says this and I quote, and we have laid the biblical foundation for these assertions in those prior messages. This is just by way of summary. It says and I quote, "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture unto which nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelation of the Spirit or traditions of men." Nothing is to be added whether by new revelation of the Spirit or traditions of men. That is a most essential statement to understand. That statement understood, believed and followed will protect you, I would venture to say, from 80-90% of the errors that riddle the so-called Christian church today. If we stick to Scripture alone and we do not listen to men claiming new revelation from God whether they be individuals within a local congregation or men of prominence on the conference circuit, we will go so far in discernment, we will be so protected from misleading doctrine, we will be so protected from men who are not actually speaking for God. So I commend that doctrine to you, Sola Scriptura.

Let me state it one other way, if you don't mind, and even if you do mind, I'm going to say it anyway so you might as well not mind. The 66 books of the Bible, the one holy Scripture is transcendent. The Bible sits in judgment of every other truth claim made anywhere at any time in the universe. The Bible is the final authority and the Bible alone is the final authority. There is nothing on par with it. There is no parallel claim to it. We reject everything that the Catholics would try to add. We reject everything the Mormons would try to add. We reject Ellen G. White. We reject all of this stuff that claims, "God has spoken to me. God has given me new revelation since the completion of the Bible and let me tell you what God has said." No. The moment that you say you have new revelation beyond the Bible, you have self-refuted your own claim.

You must understand this, beloved. This is the key to understanding where God has truly spoken. The canon of Scripture is closed. It is over. God is no longer giving new revelation to anyone anywhere because he has said and made plain that the Bible is complete and sufficient for his people. 2 Timothy 3:17 says that it is sufficient to make the man of God adequate, equipped for every good work. Well, if that's true, then there can be no need for any further revelation because what we have in Scripture is already sufficient, it is already authoritative, it is already final, and when you realize that virtually

the last words in all of the Bible after God has revealed his plan for the future ages, he takes us into eternity and the eternal kingdom in Revelation 21 and 22 and he says, "Let no one add or take away from the words of this prophecy," you realize that he was closing the door and locking it so that no one else would try to speak on his behalf ever again. That is fundamental and that, in many ways, is the front line of the battle for truth in the world today in the Christian world.

Now, having said that, we realize that there are many who teach to the contrary. They say that God is giving new revelation. The Mormons say that. Lots of voices in the so-called Christian church are saying that. They say that you should expect to receive private words from God or that God speaks through individuals and gives new words that all of the congregation is to hear and you're told that you are to experience God in this way and that God will speak to you face-to-face just like he spoke to Moses, as if you were a prophet on par with Moses, I guess. I don't know. What shall we say about all those things? How shall we assess that assertion? How shall we discern it? How shall we examine it because Scripture tells us to examine everything carefully? How are we to think about these things? Well, it leads us to take a look at biblical prophecy to see what the Bible itself says about prophecy and then once we see the principles from Scripture, we take it and apply it to the claims that are being asserted today to see whether it matches up or not. In some ways, that's the essence of discernment, to know what the Bible says and then assess modern claims in light of it. In that way, sometimes it can be difficult but the principle is simple. Scripture has spoken, let's examine what it says and then let's apply it to what others are saying to see whether it meets the test or not. That's what we want to try to do in our remaining time here today.

As we've done all along in this series, in these types of messages, a look at healing, a look at tongues, now we take a look at prophecy, we want to follow a three part outline here. First of all, we want to consider the nature of biblical prophecy. The nature of biblical prophecy and as important as the issue of healings and tongues are, and it's critical for us to have looked at those, the case can be made, the argument can be made that this issue of prophecy is even more critical than those two combined because they deal with the issue of where does God speak and who are we to listen to and what are we to follow.

So we want to ask this question to start out with: what was the biblical gift of prophecy? What was biblical prophecy and who was the biblical prophet? And we want to just make this basic and simple, and as I say that, it reminds me to just make this point to you. There are many books written on all of these issues and so as I've said in the past, we realize that we're just dealing with an introduction but we're dealing with things that we believe that if you take some of these basic principles and apply them, they can guide you through anything else that you might see in result. In other words, we know that we're not being exhaustive in this, to be exhaustive in it would take many more months of messages on these same themes, but we believe that there is clarity and there is simplicity that can guide us in our understanding.

So who was, what was the office of a biblical prophet? The biblical prophet in simple terms was a spokesman for God. He was a spokesman for God. He was a man on whose

lips were the very words of God and you can see this as we go into Scripture now, we can see the concept laid out for us in the book of Exodus 4, and I invite you to turn there as we just see the nature of what a prophet did and how a prophet was speaking for someone else; the words of someone else were on his lips. Exodus 4, beginning in verse 14 says this. You'll recall that God had called Moses to speak on his behalf. Moses says, "Lord, I'm not up to the task. I'm not an eloquent man. I'm slow of speech and slow of tongue," it says in chapter 4, verse 10. Verse 11, "The LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.' But he said, 'Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will.'" Now look at verse 14, "Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, 'Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.'" Now watch this, "You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him." Aaron was going to be the mouthpiece of Moses in these encounters. Moses was going to put his words onto Aaron's lips, as it were, and Aaron would speak on behalf of Moses so that Aaron in speaking was representing what Moses himself would have said if he had simply done it if he had the eloquence to do it. Aaron was going to be a mouthpiece for him.

Now keep that in mind and look over at chapter 7, verse 1, and you'll see this clenched with the idea of the office of a prophet. In Exodus 7:1, "the LORD said to Moses, 'See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.'" Aaron will be your prophet. Aaron will speak your words on your behalf. What Aaron says will be a reflection of what you are saying.

So the idea of a prophet is that he is one who has the words of someone else in his mouth. In true biblical prophecy, God put his words in a man's mouth. When a prophet was speaking on behalf of God, he was speaking God's words for him. That's the simplicity of the idea that we're addressing here. So biblical prophecy, beloved, was the accurate proclamation of inerrant revelation received directly from God. Biblical prophecy was the accurate proclamation of inerrant revelation received directly from God. Biblical prophecy was the accurate proclamation of inerrant revelation received directly from God and we're going to develop this here.

Now God has left for us today, we have the writings of several biblical prophets kept for us in Scripture: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and the rest of the 12 minor prophets. And what were these prophets doing? They were speaking to contemporary issues of their times. They were calling people to repent of their sin and they warned them of coming judgment if they refused. So in this era before the completion of the canon, God had his spokesmen proclaiming his word and they were the mouthpiece of God to God's people in that day. As they did that, they also spoke beyond their times and spoke of the coming Messiah and gave the prophecies that predicted centuries in advance the arrival of Christ in his first advent and spoke beyond that to his second advent which

is still future to us today. They had a lofty office. They had a lofty task and God spoke through them in order to give revelation to his people in order to guide, instruct, and exhort and rebuke his people through these men who were acting as his mouthpiece. So that's what the prophet did, they spoke the words of God. God put his words in their mouth and they spoke them.

Now that comes with a challenge. It was a challenge back then, slightly different challenge for us today. The challenge was that there were false prophets as well. There were men who claimed to speak on behalf of God but who really didn't. They would say, "Thus saith the Lord," but their mouth was filled with lies. God had not spoken to them and this was a problem throughout the history of Israel.

Let me just give you a couple of passages from one of the later prophets in the book of Jeremiah just to give you a sense of the problem and the danger that was present during the ministry of the Old Testament prophets. Jeremiah 6. In Jeremiah 6:13, we see that there was an ongoing problem of men claiming to speak for God when they really didn't. Let me say that again because it's the same problem today, men claiming to speak forth the words of God when, in fact, they really didn't. In chapter 6, verse 13, you see God saying, Jeremiah 6:13, "from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely. They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace." You have men claiming to be prophets dealing with the people falsely. You have men speaking falsely saying, "There will be peace from God, there is peace with God, all is well," when, in fact, all was not well. God's judgment was coming but they were saying that there was peace and that all was fine.

Look at Jeremiah 14 also in verses 13 and 14. You can just make note of that little parallelism, Jeremiah 6, Jeremiah 14, verses 13 and 14, to give you just a couple of reference points about false prophets and the problem of false prophets among the people of God in Old Testament times. Jeremiah 14, beginning in verse 13 says, Jeremiah speaking, "But, 'Ah, Lord GOD!' I said, 'Look, the prophets are telling them, "You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place."'" Jeremiah says, "Lord, you're giving me a message of judgment but there are these others claiming to be prophets who are saying this. What's the answer in the midst of this confusion?" Verse 14, "Then the LORD said to me, 'The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds.'"

The people who needed to follow, who wanted to follow God needed to know, "Who are we to follow? How are we to discern the true from the false when you have two different groups of men that are both claiming to speak for the Lord but saying contradictory and mutually exclusive things? How are we to know?" And the problem of confusion there leads us to realize that we need something, we need an external standard by which to judge these things because we can't simply take the man's word for it; we can't simply take a man's word for it. "Oh, God spoke to me." "Oh really? Well, let me write it down

and what did he say?" We're not meant to be that gullible because people speak and claim falsely as we're going to see more in New Testament passages in just a moment. It was going to be a reality that there would always be men claiming to speak for God whom God had not spoken to at all and it is so vital for you to recognize and to make that distinction in your mind. The people in the Old Testament needed to know who to follow and what had God done? God had given them sure standards for discernment. God had provided them with what was necessary to discern the truth.

That brings us to our second point for this morning as we look at the limitation on biblical prophecy. The limitation on biblical prophecy. The limitation on biblical prophecy. Beloved, as you read Scripture, you see that early on even in the days of Moses, God gave clear tests to verify claims to prophetic authority. First of all, he required the messages to have complete theological accuracy, complete conformity with prior revelation, and for this I want you to turn back to the book of Deuteronomy 13 and we're just going to look at three discernment tests, we're going to look at one passage each, and look at the way that God had lay down requirements to help the people know.

Deuteronomy 13:1 it says, "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you," now stop right there. Stop right there and realize how vulnerable the situation was with the condition that God is laying down here. A man rises up and claims to be a prophet and he does a sign and a wonder and it comes true concerning which he had spoken. "I'm a prophet." Boom! And a sign takes place and you would think, especially in today's charismatic circles, something like that is a guy to be believed. That's a guy to follow. He had proven it with a sign, right?

But go on and keep reading. What does he then say? What, then, is his instruction to the people of God? "Saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them.'" Oh, he's introducing falsehood. He's introducing false worship. He's got the sign but he's teaching error. He's teaching and pulling them away from the true God.

What's the response to be? Verse 3, "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul." The greatest commandment, part of which is going to be shown in the way that his people exercise discernment. Will you follow false teachers just because they show you a sign? You're being tested when that happens God said to Israel back then, it's the same today.

Verse 4, he says, "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you." Even if a so-called prophet gave a sign, he could not contradict Moses. If he did, if he called people away from God unto idols, he was to be put to death.

This idea of theological accuracy, of biblical orthodoxy was to be enforced upon pain of the death penalty, beloved. God is not messing around on these issues of who his true spokesmen are and what the standard is to be so that even a sign was not proof that a man spoke for God if his teaching was aberrant, if he led people away from the true God who had revealed himself in the exodus from Egypt. Upon, beloved, let this weigh on you, upon pain of the death penalty. That is how seriously God views it all and so there is this test of theological accuracy.

Secondly, God required of prophets complete prophetic accuracy. When they said, "This will happen in the future," there was a standard of 100% accuracy that would verify them and one mistake would be the end of it all. Look at Deuteronomy 18, beginning in verse 18. God says in Deuteronomy 18:18, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth," do you see the theme again? Just the clarity and the simplicity of what the prophet was to be and do? "And he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. You may say in your heart, 'How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'" How do we know, God, when a prophet hasn't spoken from you because he claims to speak in your name? How are we going to be able to distinguish the true from the false? It was a critical question 3,500 years ago. How are we going to know? Verse 22, "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him." Verse 20, that prophet will die. Verse 22, you don't need to be afraid of him. Don't follow him. No matter how he threatens you with his words, don't be afraid of him. Don't listen to him because the fact that his prophecy did not come true, which he offered in my name, is sure-fire proof that he does not speak on my behalf.

So God required complete prophetic accuracy. Any failure of fulfillment showed the man to be a false prophet – mark it – upon pain of the death penalty. Complete theological orthodoxy, theological accuracy upon pain of the death penalty. Complete prophetic accuracy upon pain of the death penalty. Beloved, I've got more to say here but I want you to just kind of step back with me, take a deep breath with me here, and realize how from the very beginning, how seriously and how sacred the boundaries were that God placed around his prophets to ensure that only his true spokesmen would be the ones that his people listened to. People were to die over violations over this. God is not messing around. To claim to speak in the name of the God of the Bible is a matter of great severe consequence. That is not to be done lightly. That is not a casual thing like saying, "Oh, she we go to Waffle House or to Ihop for breakfast today? Oh, by the way, God told me this." No. No. No. No. No. There is a sacred, separate, holy realm established from which a small circle of men and within a very small and circumscribed circle, men would speak in Bible times and no one else was to go there. God's standards here and the holiness with which he treats his revelation, the holiness with which he takes and the severity with

which he looks upon men who would presume to speak new revelation in his name should cause everyone to fear and tremble and quake. We do not lightly say, "Oh, the Lord told me such-and-such." No. No. Life and death matters are at stake here according to God himself.

Thirdly, God required complete moral integrity as well. Look at Jeremiah again, chapter 23 in verses 13 and 14. Again verses 13 and 14. It's kind of cool: 6, 14, 23. It required complete moral integrity. Jeremiah 23:13, it says, "Moreover, among the prophets of Samaria," that was the northern kingdom, "I saw an offensive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray. Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; And they strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah." What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah? Judgment rained down, right? He said, "These false prophets who are walking in sin, practicing adultery, walking in falsehood, strengthening wicked men in their deeds, they are like unto Me the people that I have judged in the past." Complete moral integrity. Moral integrity, prophetic accuracy, theological accuracy, 100%, 100% of the time.

Now to speak the words of the Lord, then, in this way to say, "The words of God are on my lips," was a high and sacred duty that only those who really had the gift should be doing, but because there is so much power and influence to be had by claiming that God has spoken to you, because in our day and age there is a lot of money to be made by men claiming that God has spoken to them, speaking to vulnerable people who have loose minds and loose wallets, you can make a lot of money this way. But for those that truly fear the Lord and fear the God who has revealed himself in his word, we realize that this is a high and sacred duty that is not to be trifled with. God established high standards to protect his word: perfect accuracy, perfect fulfillment, moral integrity, a violation of which subjected a man, made him liable to death. How much more serious can this be?

Now you follow this theme into the New Testament. We're not going to take the time to look at the role of New Testament prophets but what you find in the New Testament is that in the New Testament era there was a temporary gift of a New Testament prophet given to the church in that transitional age where God gave revelation awaiting the fulfillment of the work of the apostles and the completion of the canon. What you find if you follow this through, if you study it through, we're not going to take time for it today, what you find is that the terms that are used to refer to prophets in the Old Testament and New Testament are used interchangeably. You can study this through in the book of Acts when it refers to Old Testament prophets, New Testament prophets, it's speaking about them in the same terms, in the same way, indicating that the standards were the same of accuracy and orthodoxy.

So what are we to say about this? How do we take what I said at the introduction, Sola Scriptura, and look at what's said about prophets in the Bible? We believe that God revealed himself in past times, that he spoke through prophets, he spoke through the apostles, but that that time of revelation has ceased. It is over. There were prophets in the

Old and New Testaments but like apostles, like signs, like wonders, that office has ceased. It is over and Sola Scriptura helps us to understand why that is the case, but now prominent voices in the so-called church disagree with that statement. They say that God does speak to individual Christians today apart from the 66 books of the Bible, in addition to the 66 books of the Bible and this has a lot of consequences and so I want to take just a few moments to address it.

Wayne Grudem is a defender of today's charismatic prophecies. He's a Reformed theologian. His "Systematic Theology" in some parts is excellent and helpful, but when he gets into spiritual gifts, beloved, if you have his "Systematic Theology," take an Exacto knife and cut those chapters out and throw them away with fear and trembling because he's not reliable in this area. He believes that a gift of prophecy operates in the church today and he has said this, I'm quoting from a couple of his different books in what I'm about to say. He says that today there is prophecy and he defines prophecy as this in the New Testament age, he says prophecy is, "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind." Let me say that again. He defines prophecy as someone in the church today telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind. An idea pops in their mind and they say, "This is a prophecy from the Lord." So he leaves us open to the fact that God speaks through audible voices or subjective impressions. So in that realm of thought, in that realm of understanding, they can easily say, "God told me such-and-such."

Now as you read on, before you go any further, you should ask the question: does the prophecy of which he speaks conform to the pattern of biblical accuracy of 100% accuracy that we've been developing from Deuteronomy and Jeremiah? What does he say about this prophecy? Well, let me remind you of something that I said about healings and about tongues. I said nobody's doing the biblical gift today. They do not do it because they cannot do it and so they have to define the gifts down to something that is completely sub-biblical. That is exactly what is happening here.

Here's what he says about this so-called gift of prophecy and I quote, he said, "All must recognize that," I'm quoting Wayne Grudem. I'm not advocating this, I'm quoting it only to refute it. Grudem says this, "All must recognize that the revelation is partial and may not be clear to the person prophesying and may contain elements of mistaken understanding or interpretation on the part of the person prophesying." That ends one quote. Let me quote again, "Most charismatic teachers today would agree that contemporary prophecy is not equal to Scripture in authority. There is almost uniform testimony from all sections of the charismatic movement that prophecy is imperfect and impure and will contain elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted."

Why in the world are you using the biblical term prophecy, the word of God, the word of truth, 100% accuracy, to describe that which in the same breath you're saying it's impure, it's inaccurate? What on earth are you doing? Why are you foisting this cancer upon the church? This has nothing to do with the biblical gift or the biblical standards by their own definition but they want to apply the word "prophecy" to it. You see, they want the word "healings, miraculous healings," they want the word "tongues," they want the word

"prophecy," but in every case they have to define it down so that it is not the supernatural thing of which God spoke and which God did in biblical times. It's not the same. As I've said before, you've got a giraffe with a long neck in front of you, it doesn't change into a dog just because you call it a dog. It's still a giraffe. Its constituent elements have not changed simply because you apply the wrong term to describe it.

Think, beloved, of how the prophets spoke in the Old Testament, "Thus saith the Lord," with clear authority, pronouncing without hesitation, without qualification, "This is what God has said," and look and review the course of biblical history and see how God vindicated them and how Isaiah 700 years before the time could prophesy of a virgin birth and 700 years later it comes to perfect fulfillment. Think of how they spoke of the glories of Christ to come, spoke of his death, Isaiah 53, spoke of his resurrection and these things all come to pass. That's the real thing, not what I'm about to describe to you.

You ask how is the prophecy of which today's continuationists, how is this to function? What does it look like? I couldn't make this up. I wouldn't make this up and yet this has great influence within the so-called Christian church. Dr. Grudem says this and I quote, "If someone really does think God is bringing something to mind which should be reported in the congregation," remember this is his gift of prophecy, this is his gift of prophecy that he's describing how it should operate, he says there's nothing wrong with saying, "I think the Lord is putting on my mind." Or, "It seems to me that the Lord is showing us," or some similar expression. So you qualify it. You're making suggestions now in the name of prophecy. "I kinda think that the Lord may be doing this." Beloved, that's not biblical prophecy at all. Does it sound like God's revelation to you? I ask you, does this sound like the God of authority, the God of truth speaking through someone and it comes out, "I think God might be saying this but what do you guys think?" This is not prophecy at all. Does this sound like God's prophecy to you? You know, God's revelation that must always be 100% accurate in doctrine and predictive precision all the time with no exceptions upon pain of the death penalty? Is that what they're talking about? It has nothing to do with what they're talking about except that they've misappropriated the biblical term prophecy to describe their modern practice.

Let me ask the same question in a different way. I'm indebted to the author, Sam Waldron, from his excellent book "To Be Continued," for this thought that I believe is very powerful. Stay with me here. It's a simple point. Old Testament, New Testament, right? Old covenant, new covenant. Old Testament shadows, animal sacrifices. New Testament, Christ, the reality, the light, the fullness of revelation, God's final word. Scripture talks about the new covenant being better than the old covenant. We now have Christ, not shadows. We now have the perfect one-time sacrifice on the cross, not repeated animal sacrifices. You get the point. New covenant, it's a better covenant. It's better than what came before. Are we to believe that God guides his people now through an obviously lesser method of prophecy than what the people in the Old Testament had? It's foolish. If something's better, it's going to be better, not a huge step down.

Now beloved, when you consider all of these things, you need to remember that the New Testament warned us that this very kind of thing, this introduction of false prophecy

would come into the church. It warned us again and again and again. The fact that people fall for this stuff is not God's fault because he warned us in his sufficient word which he closed the book on and said, "Pay attention, give heed to what I've said here." He warned us repeatedly.

Look at Matthew 24. This is part of the biblical limitation on prophecy. I'm building up to a conclusion here. Matthew 24:11 says, "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many." Verse 24, "false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." Beloved, it brings me sorrow to read these passages. I get no pleasure out of this at all. Acts 20:28, turn there with me. Acts 20:28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders said this in verse 29, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." He said there are going to be men rising up within the church, from within, from inside the church speaking perverse things to draw people after them. In 2 Peter 2, you don't need to turn there, I'll just read this. 2 Peter 2:1 says this, he said, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep."

Beloved, these are weighty matters of which we're speaking now. We're speaking about authority. We're speaking about the difference between true and false. You know, one of the things that people in charismatic circles will say that 500 million charismatics can't be wrong. You know, they just try to overwhelm you with numbers. "Well, have you not read in Scripture," I would say to them, "that many will follow their sensuality? That many will be led astray? That many will say to Me on the day of judgment, "Lord, Lord, did we not?" That's no argument at all. That's proving my point if you want to make that argument." Yeah, I'm animated about this not only out of concern for you and for our church and to protect our church, I'm animated for those outside the walls of our church that are following these kinds of fallacious follies, thinking that they're following the word of God when they're not.

My friend and former co-pastor, Phil Johnson, has an article that I encourage you to Google titled "Broad Brush," painting with a broad brush. Google "Phil Johnson Broad Brush" and it will pop up on the search results. In that article and in other places as well, it's just that that's a convenient reference, Phil meticulously documents these things. Charismatic theology is routinely erroneous. Charismatic prophecy routinely does not come to pass. They're content to have a 20% accuracy and they congratulate themselves

on 20% accuracy. Charismatic leaders are routinely greedy and immoral men. I'm not lodging that accusation against Wayne Grudem, just to be clear, I'm talking more broadly about the movement altogether. Their theology is routinely erroneous, their prophecy routinely does not come to pass, their leaders are routinely greedy and immoral.

Apply this biblical standard, beloved. 100% doctrinal accuracy, 100% prophetic accuracy, moral integrity being the standard for true prophets. Look, look, when you are spectacularly collapsing on every element of that, you have no claim to speak for God whatsoever and the true people of God will look at you and turn their backs on you and not listen to you because you have proven that you are not a prophet of God. It has been established as fact for those who know their Bibles.

Here's the sad thing. The best names in Reformed continuationism, give them cover by teaching the kinds of things that I've quoted from Wayne Grudem. These men say a lot of good things, a lot of true things in their teachings, but when they open the door for continuing prophecy, they open the door for everyone, they let the camel in the tent this way, and it is sad to see the results of people who have taken cover under the umbrella of men like John Piper, Wayne Grudem and Sam Storms. It is a grievous travesty and tragedy in the Christian church and, beloved, this unbiblical version of prophecy is frightening because it means that anybody can say anything at any time and if we don't apply standards of discernment, the people of God are cast adrift at sea. They attribute to the God of truth their statements of error. Beloved, that's not prophecy. Do you know what that is? That's blasphemy. It injures the reputation of God and in keeping with our biblical responsibility here in this local body, we reject it.

Sola Scriptura. God speaks in the Bible alone. That conviction will protect you in these confusing days and I ask you, visitor, regular attender and member alike, will you embrace that conviction even if it costs you friends?

Next week, we're going to conclude this entire series with a message, "God's Guidance Today." If we're not looking for God's voice today speaking to us individually in our individual circumstances, where then do we find his guidance? That's what we want to address to conclude this whole series. I hope you'll be with us and I invite you to bow with me now in prayer. My friends, there is so much deception in the world and Scripture says that even your own heart is deceitful, sinful, fallen, not a trustworthy vessel in which God would speak. You need revelation outside of yourself, not dependent upon your own thoughts and imaginations. My friends, you need also a Savior from outside of yourself and I ask you whether you have truly come to Christ abandoning sin, forsaking all, forsaking the world, forsaking false theology, to come to him alone for your salvation. You know, the wonder and the hope in everything that we've said here is that towering above all of these things is the reality that Christ has shed his atoning blood for men and women just like you and that he receives everyone who comes to him humbly, confessing their sin and embracing him by faith. Is that you today? That's where the truth leads you, it leads you to the one who, himself, is the way, the truth and the life.

Father, bless these words and seal them to our hearts. Help us to be faithful to your word written and Incarnate. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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