

The Gift of Prophecy



The following notes contain some of the material presented in the series "Is God for Real?"

The Bible records the words of many ancient prophets in faraway lands of long ago. But does God still speak through prophets today? And if so, how do we distinguish between a genuine prophet of God and a false one?

How has God given the gift of prophecy in the past? Let's begin by looking at what God says in Amos 3:7. The Bible says "surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." This verse tells us that when God is going to do something He announces it through His prophets. We can see various examples of this in the Old Testament of the Bible. Before the flood God raised up a prophet to tell people that it was going to take place, his name was Noah, and he not only proclaimed the message, but he built an Ark too. When God's people were slaves in Egypt He sent a message of deliverance through Moses, and brought the people out of captivity. Also before Jesus began His ministry on earth, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Messiah.

But how does God communicate with a prophet? We can read in Numbers 12:6 that God says, "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision, and I speak to him in a dream." Now this doesn't mean that if you have a strange dream, because you ate too much Pizza, that you're suddenly a prophet of God, but God has used dreams to communicate to His prophets in the Bible, and Daniel and Joseph would be two good examples of that. Jesus said in John 14:29 that, "now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe." The reason God gives us prophecy is because as we see God's predictions being fulfilled we have greater confidence in His Word and we learn to trust Him more. As we look back at all the things that have been fulfilled it gives us assurance that those things that are yet to be fulfilled, will be, based on the evidence of the past. We begin to recognise that God is faithful, so that when He says He will come again, we can believe that in spite of the chaos of our world, God will soon come to take His children home.

Do those who claim to be prophets come from God? When the followers of Jesus asked Him about the end of the world, the first thing He said was – don't be deceived. We can read it in Matthew 24:4. Then in verse 11 He says, "many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." So not all prophets are genuinely from God. The Bible also encourages us to test, to see whether a person is a real prophet of God or not. In 1 John 4:1 we read, "Beloved do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." After reading these warnings we might be tempted to reject all prophecy, but the Bible also says in 1Thes 5:20, "Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good."

How to identify a true prophet

- A true Prophet's predictions will come to pass – Jer 28:8, 9
- A true prophet leads people to the God of the Bible, not from Him – Deut 13:1-3

- Their messages are consistent with the rest of the Bible – Isa 8:20
- They are known by their fruits, which means their lives glorify God. Matt 7:15-20; Matt 5:16

Does the Bible say there will be Prophets in the last days?

Read Acts 2:17-18 - In the last days. Notice daughters and maidservants as well as men. The Bible tells us of a number of women who had the gift of prophecy – Huldah, Miriam, Debra, Anna and the four daughters of Philip the evangelist. In addition, Revelation 12:17 & 19:10 reveal that God’s last day Remnant Church will have the Testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of Prophecy.

I believe that the Spirit of Prophecy was manifested in the life of a woman by the name of Ellen G. White who lived in North America in nineteenth century and received her first vision at age 17. She went on to have more than 2000 visions and dreams over next 70 years. She wrote down the messages God gave her, so we still have those messages today.

When in vision she did not breath, just like in Daniel 10:17. Although she only had a school education up to the third grade, her writings on health were way ahead of her time. Today the largest protestant health system in the world has been established on the health principles she wrote. Her writings are also responsible for the largest protestant education system in the world. She wrote over 10,000 pages or 25 million words on a variety of subjects such as prophecy, family matters, faith and history. Even those who did not always agree with her believed that her messages were from God.

I would encourage you to take the Bible’s council to test all things. I have said that I believe that Ellen White had the gift of prophecy, but don’t just take my word for it. Take a little book she wrote, such as “Steps to Christ,” and read it for yourself. Millions have read that book and been drawn closer to God as a result, which is one of the reasons it has been translated into over 140 different languages. Within its pages you will find the same sweet spirit that Jesus had. Throughout Ellen White’s writings she constantly uplifts Jesus and directs people to the Bible. Sometimes we may feel that God is far away, and wonder if He still notices what happens here on the earth. But God still loves His church, and still blesses it with all the gifts of the Spirit found in Ephesians 4, which includes the gift of Prophecy.

Ellen White died in 1915 at the age of 87. Secular Newspapers reported the event. The New York Independent said this, “Here is a noble record, and she deserves great honor... She showed no spiritual pride and she sought no filthy lucre. She lived the life and did the work of a worthy prophetess.” The New York Independent, August 3, 1915

Is it clear to you today that God has spoken through His prophets in the Bible? Having sent messages through the prophets before important Biblical events, doesn’t it make sense that God would send a prophet before the Second Coming of Christ? The Bible says, ‘Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper,’ 2Chron 20:20. Do you recognise that God has communicated with the world through the gift of prophecy?

If you would like to know more about this subject, or others in the series, ‘Is God for Real?’ then please contact one of our staff and they will be happy to help you.