

Review

Definition of prophecy: ***Human Report of a Divine Revelation***

Using human words to report something God brings to mind

That does what:

- Accomplishes upbuilding, encouragement and consolation (14:3)
- Calls church to unified action (14:8)
- Calls unbelievers to repentance, reveals the secrets of the heart (14:25)
- Builds up the church (4:12)

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Pitfall: ***Thinking that if I'm not at peace then it must be out of order.***

You might not be at peace because there is knowledge that you need that you don't currently have.
(Think: hitting turbulence on an airplane)

Do not despise prophecies

What was that like for the Apostle Paul?

Teaching of 1 Corinthians 12-14

- charismata- grace gift
- 12:4 - there are a variety of gifts (charismata) but the same Spirit
- 12:22-23 *"The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable*

Receiving Agabus

- See attached handout

Receiving direction

Acts 16

16 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. 8 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Encouraging and commissioning Timothy

1 Timothy 1:18-19

18 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, 19 holding faith and a good conscience.

1 Timothy 4:13-16

13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

But test everything

1 Corinthians 14: 26 What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.

1 Corinthians 14:29: Prophecies must be weighed by the congregation

***Diakrino* - διακρίνω - to separate, make a distinction**

- Other places in Greek literature it is used to talk of “sifting wheat”, distinguishing between clean and unclean animals
- Cognate word used in Hebrews 5:14 - *But solid milk is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*
- In the NT, Acts 15:9 - distinguishing between Jew and Gentile

The sense of “making distinctions” or “carefully evaluating” would make *diakrino* an appropriate word in 1 Corinthians 14:29 -- appropriate, that is, if Paul had meant to speak of a process whereby every member of the congregation would listen carefully and evaluate each statement, distinguishing what he or she felt to be good from the less good, what was thought to be helpful from the unhelpful, what was perceived to be true from the false.

If Paul had meant that the Corinthians were to judge whether each speaker was a true or false prophet, he probably would have used some other word - not *diakrino* but probably *krino*. This is the term the New Testament prefers when speaking of judgements where there are only two possibilities, such as guilty or not guilty, right or wrong, true or false (1 Cor 4:5, 5:3, Matthew 7:1)

In fact, in 1 Corinthians 6:2-6 Paul may consciously be distinguishing formal legal judgements outside the church (for which he uses *krino*) from more informal decisions inside the church (for which he uses *diakrino*). Within the church, it is less likely that one party will be declared “guilty” or the other “not guilty” and more likely that a careful evaluation will find some fault on both sides.

- Wayne Grudem, “The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today”

V. 29 Let two or three prophets speak

What is in view here is people in the church with a recognized giftedness in the area of prophecy that were known by the people. So, what is being discerned when they share is what is the “good” that needs to be held on to -- not whether or not they are false prophets because they lack perfection.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' 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 know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

1 John 4:1-3

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

The weighing of New Testament prophecy conveys the idea of determining the good from the bad (test everything, hold fast to what is good) than it does the determining of something being all right or all wrong.

The elders are distinctly called to govern -- therefore any prophetic word that points to a directional decision involves their discernment and care. But the weighing of what is good and what needs to be left alone is the responsibility of the congregation.

Helpful Questions to ask:

- Is it upbuilding, encouraging, or consoling?
- Is it revealing a secret of your heart?
- Does it sound like the voice of your Father?
- Does it display and convey the fruit of the Spirit?

Pitfall: *Thinking that every public prophetic word should be encouraging to every person in the same way.*

Make general observations from the text:

- How are prophets in the church in Corinth viewed differently than Old Testament prophets?
- How are prophets in the church in Corinth's words distinct in authoritative direction from Paul's Apostolic authority?

14:30 - Prophecies were intentionally neglected

29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

- Some Prophecies were not shared (let the first be silent)
 - Think: narrow road, not tightrope
- Prophets are to be submitted to each other and to the others in the gathering for the sake of encouragement
- Prophets are to be under control (this is not an ecstatic exercise, it is a deliberate controlled one)

1 Corinthians 11, 14:33-35, 11:2-16 - Women who can prophecy in the church but not govern the church

33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

11:5 but every wife (gune: wife/woman) who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head,

We know the context of 1 Cor 11 is public because:

- The woman/wife needed a public display of submission - head covering
- It's in the same discussion as the Lord's supper

14:36-38 - Prophecy was referred to in contrast to Apostolic authority

36 Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? 37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

Hold fast to what is good

39 So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But all things should be done decently and in order.

Think:

Order like in a family. Not like in a courtroom or a chamber of government.

Order like being on a plane that can fly through turbulence. Not like being in a simulator.

1 Corinthians 13:2

2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Ephesians 3

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family[c] in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Guidelines for Sharing Public Prophetic Words

We love that the prophetic gift is growing in our church and are so encouraged by the fruit we have seen from individuals growing in their personal discernment, because of how God has spoken to us personally through it. With this in mind, we would like to outline some guidelines to help us better walk together in unity and wisdom as a church family. Two values that we hold in tension as a church are structure and freedom. So, our hope is that these points provide the structure that gives boundaries to our actions as well as giving freedom to continue to grow in our prophetic gifting within those boundaries.

Two important points:

1. The context of public prophetic words being shared was the public gathering of the church.

1 Corinthians 14

26 What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. 33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

2. We have an example of prophets coming from Jerusalem to Antioch. The only one specifically expounded on is Agabus. In both of these instances, Agabus' sharing was in the context of a relationship he had with those he was sharing with.

Acts 11

27 Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). 29 So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. 30 And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 21

7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. 8 On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. 10 While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 12 When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

The age of mass communication:

We live in an age of instant mass communication that was unlike that of the New Testament. While we do want to take advantage of the common grace of vehicles like email and text, we also want to lean into the Scriptures for guidelines. Even within the framework of New Testament correspondence letters, we do not have reference to prophetic words being shared through those letters. So, we want to emphasize the importance of words being shared publicly in order to be discerned.

Guidelines:

1. For any prophetic word that is meant for the corporate body, first look for public spaces to share it first rather than text or email. This may mean that there is a gap between when the Lord gives you the revelation and when you have a moment to share it. We encourage you to write it down or record it as a voice memo on your phone. The additional time between receiving the word and sharing it will allow you to prayerfully discern if it is something meant for the corporate body or if it is something the Lord is speaking to you personally. You may share it first with one or two trusted friends or mentors, but other than that, please wait to share it within a public setting.
 - a. **Three ideal places for this:**
 - i. Sunday pre-service prayer meeting - 8:30-9:30 a.m.
 - ii. Thursday night corporate prayer - 6:30-8 p.m.
 - iii. Tuesday Staff meeting - 10 a.m.
2. If you are unable to attend one of these spaces, you may email your word to a leader or fellow church member who can share it publicly.
3. The elders will use these times to discern if prophetic words need to be shared in the Sunday gathering. If you receive a prophetic word during the Sunday service, you may share it with the elder on the front row during the communion time and he will discern whether or not it needs to be shared immediately with the church.
4. Because the context of outside prophetic voices was always rooted in relationships, we ask that you refrain from publicly sharing links or articles regarding prophetic words from outside of the church body. While we do believe that there are gifted prophets within the larger body of Christ, we trust that if God has something to speak to us directionally as a church family then he will use the relationships we currently have to do so (both inside and outside of the church).
5. If you read something from outside of the church or you recognize themes of prophetic words from within the church that you would like to bring to the elders' attention, please email Dolph Farmer dolph@charlestownepd.com and copy Lydia Farmer lydia@jicc.us. Lydia keeps a running record of prophetic words that are shared and Dolph is the delegated elder to share prophetic words or themes in the monthly elders meeting. Please know that we value this step. We understand that God uses the entire body to bring shepherding care to the body. So, if you believe something has been missed or inadvertently disregarded, please call this to the elders attention.

similar to what we found at Corinth and at Ephesus and perhaps also at Antioch (see above), then Paul's disobedience to the prophecy would be entirely understandable.

In fact, we can surmise something of how such a prophecy would come about. Suppose that some of the Christians at Tyre had had some kind of "revelation" or indication from God about the suffering that Paul would face at Jerusalem. Then it would have been very natural for them to couple their subsequent prophecy (their report of this revelation) with their own (erroneous) interpretation, and thus to warn Paul not to go.

In short, this passage indicates a type of prophecy which was not thought by Paul to possess absolute divine authority in its actual words: The prophets at Tyre were not speaking "words of the Lord."

Although he does not agree with the viewpoint on prophecy which I am arguing for in this book, it is significant that Richard Gaffin understands this verse to represent an unreliable human response to something revealed by the Holy Spirit:

Luke's point is not the impaired validity and unreliability of their speech, in which nevertheless the Spirit is somewhat instrumental, but their recoil against what the Spirit had revealed to them of Paul's future. That revelation and their response to it must not be confused or merged in their speech-act.⁴

Here Gaffin seems to understand the event in a way similar to what I expressed above. There is a revelation from the Holy Spirit to the disciples at Tyre, and in response to that revelation they tell Paul not to go to Jerusalem. The difference in our viewpoints is that I would call the response or report of that revelation a "prophecy," and Gaffin would not. But whatever term is used, it is significant that we would both say that there can be a "revelation" from the Holy Spirit to a person or persons, and also a spoken response to that revelation which can have "impaired validity" and "unreliability." That is really the essence of what I am arguing for in this book, and what—it seems to me—the New Testament usually calls "prophecy." But if the *concept* be admitted even if it is called not "prophecy" but "an unreliable human speech-act in response to a revelation from the Holy Spirit,"

there does not seem to be much difference in our understanding at this point. Nor does there seem to be strong reason for saying that such an "unreliable human response to revelation from the Holy Spirit" could not occur today.

Acts 21:9: Philip's daughters as prophets

This brief passage follows close on the narrative above about Tyre. Continuing toward Jerusalem, Paul comes to another port city, Caesarea:

On the morrow we departed and came to Caesarea; and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. And he had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9, RSV).

No indication is given of the content of their prophecies, but the fact that prophetic warnings to Paul about suffering in Jerusalem come just before (Acts 21:4) and just after (Acts 21:11) this passage makes us think that perhaps similar warnings were contained in the prophecies given by Philip's daughters.

In any case, this passage gives some brief confirmation to our discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:5 in chapter 3: If women were not allowed authoritative roles in congregational meetings in the first-century churches, then it seems unlikely that these women would be speaking with the same kind of absolute authority as the apostles. Much more likely is the possibility that they were "prophesying" simply by reporting in their own words what God would bring to mind, and that these prophecies did not have the authority of words of the Lord.

Acts 21:10-11: Agabus, scene II: A prophecy with two small mistakes

Following just after the verse mentioning Philip's daughters, two more verses describe another prophetic event which confronts Paul, still in Caesarea. Luke writes:

While we were staying for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us he took Paul's girdle and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "Thus says the

Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:10-11, RSV).

There appear to be two competing factors in this passage. On the one hand, Agabus's introductory phrase, "Thus says the Holy Spirit," suggests an attempt to speak like the Old Testament prophets, who said, "Thus says the Lord . . ."

On the other hand, however, the events of the narrative itself do not coincide with the kind of accuracy that the Old Testament requires for those who speak God's words. In fact, by Old Testament standards, Agabus would have been condemned as a false prophet, because in Acts 21:27-35 neither of his predictions are fulfilled.

First, Agabus predicted that "the Jews at Jerusalem" would "bind" Paul (Acts 21:11; the Greek word for "bind" here is *deo*). However, when Paul is actually captured in Jerusalem later in the same chapter, Luke tells us twice that it was not the Jews but the Romans who *bound* Paul: "Then the tribune came up and arrested him, and ordered him to be *bound* [Greek *deo*] with two chains" (Acts 21:33, RSV). Similarly, in reflecting on this event, "the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had *bound* [Greek *deo*] him" (Acts 22:29, RSV).

The second "mistake" in Agabus's prophecy concerned the second detail he predicted, the fact that the Jews would "deliver" Paul into the hands of the Gentiles. Here the Greek word for deliver is *paradidomi*, "to deliver, hand over." Essential to the sense of this word is the idea of actively, consciously, willingly "delivering, giving over, handing over" something or someone to someone (or something) else—this is the case in all of the other 119 instances of its use in the New Testament.

This word *paradidomi* is used, for example, of Judas "delivering" Jesus into the hands of the Jewish leaders (Matt. 10:4; 26:16; etc.); of the Jews then "delivering" Jesus into the hands of the Gentiles (Romans) (Matt. 20:19); "delivering" John the Baptist to prison (Mark 1:14); Moses "delivering" laws to the people (Acts 6:14); or Paul "delivering" teachings to the church (1 Cor. 15:3). None of the other 119 instances of the word in the New Testament lacks the idea of an action that is consciously, intentionally done by the one doing the "delivering."

But in Luke's narrative following the prophecy of Agabus, he shows that the Jews do not "deliver" Paul over to the hands of the Gentiles. Rather than intentionally "giving Paul over" to the hands of the Gentiles (as the Jews had done with Jesus, for example), they tried to kill him themselves (Acts 21:31). He had to be forcibly *rescued* from the Jews by the Roman tribune and his soldiers (Acts 21:32-33), and even then "he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd" (Acts 21:35).

Now it might be argued that Luke has no intention of showing that Agabus gave an inaccurate prophecy. These are really only differences in detail, someone might say. However, this explanation does not take full enough account of the fact that these are the *only* two details Agabus mentions—they are, in terms of content, the heart of his prophecy. In fact, these details are what make it unusual as a prediction. Probably anyone who knew how the Jews throughout the Empire had treated Paul in various cities could have "predicted" with no revelation from the Holy Spirit at all that Paul would meet violent opposition from the Jews in Jerusalem. What was unique about Agabus's prophecy was this prediction of "binding" and "delivering into the hands of the Gentiles." And on these two key elements, he is just a bit wrong.

Now it is especially in the case of prophetic pronouncement that accuracy in detail was an essential mark of authenticity. Note the following examples:

- Joshua 6:26 (RSV): Joshua predicted that of the man who rebuilds Jericho, "At the cost of his first-born shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates." In 1 Kings 16:34, both predictions come true for Hiel of Bethel.
- 1 Kings 13:2: A man of God from Judah predicted that someone named Josiah would be born to the house of David and would sacrifice the disobedient priests themselves upon the altar at Bethel. In 2 Kings 23:15-16, 20, this prediction comes true.
- 1 Kings 17:14: Elijah predicted that the jar of meal would not be used up and the jug of oil would not run dry. In 17:16, this prediction comes true.
- 1 Kings 21:23: Elijah predicted that the dogs would eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel. In 2 Kings 9:35-36, this prediction comes true.

- 2 Kings 7:1: In famine-stricken, besieged Samaria, Elisha predicted that one day later, about the same time of day, a measure of fine meal would be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria. In 2 Kings 7:16, this prediction comes true.

More examples could be given, but the pattern should be clear.⁵ Regarding the mistakes in details in Agabus's prophecy, D. A. Carson writes, "I can think of no reported Old Testament prophet whose prophecies are so wrong on the details."⁶

Furthermore, Luke is aware of the legitimacy of making prophetic fulfillment explicit where it occurs:

- Luke 4:21: Jesus claimed that Isaiah 61:1-2 had been fulfilled in himself (cf. Luke 24:44).
- Acts 1:16-20: Peter claimed that the predictions about Judas in Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 were fulfilled.
- Acts 3:18: The predictions of "all the prophets," that the Messiah should suffer, were fulfilled.
- Acts 11:28: The prediction of Agabus, that there would be a famine over all the world, was fulfilled in the days of Claudius.
- Acts 13:27, 29: The Old Testament prophets' predictions were fulfilled when the Jewish leaders condemned Christ and had him crucified.
- Acts 13:33-35: The Old Testament predictions of Christ's resurrection were fulfilled (cf. Acts 2:25-31).

But in the case of this prediction by Agabus, even in contrast to the general prediction in Acts 11:28, Luke's silence about the "fulfillment" is telling. Not only do we have an unfulfilled prophecy but a prophecy whose two elements—"binding" and "giving over" by the Jews—are explicitly falsified by the subsequent narrative.⁷

Two other considerations support this interpretation. First, the nature of the error itself. It is not that Agabus has spoken in a totally false or misleading way; it is just that he has the details wrong. But this kind of minor inaccuracy is exactly compatible with the type of prophecy we found earlier in 1 Corinthians, in which the prophet receives some kind of revelation and then reports it in his own words.

He would have the general idea correct (Paul would be imprisoned at Jerusalem), but the details somewhat wrong.

In this case, for instance, the text could be perfectly well explained by supposing that Agabus had had a vision of Paul as a prisoner of the Romans in Jerusalem, surrounded by an angry mob of Jews. His own interpretation of such a "vision" or "intuitive insight" (from the Holy Spirit) would be that the Jews had bound Paul and handed him over to the Romans, and that is what he would (erroneously) prophesy.

Secondly, such a solution makes the Agabus narrative fit Luke's larger purpose in the section, which is no doubt to show the contrast between Paul's sure knowledge of God's will and his resolute purpose to obey it in spite of personal danger (cf. Acts 20:22-24; 21:13), and the uncertain grasp of God's will possessed by the prophets and other disciples whom Paul meets (Acts 21:4, 12-14) and who try to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem. The close connection with the misleading instructions in Acts 21:4 is especially significant: Both the prophecies in Tyre and the one in Caesarea are nearly right, but not completely so.

It seems, therefore, that the best solution is to say that Agabus had a "revelation" from the Holy Spirit concerning what would happen to Paul in Jerusalem, and gave a prophecy which included his own interpretation of this revelation (and therefore some mistakes in the exact details). Luke then recorded Agabus's prophecy exactly, and recorded the subsequent events exactly, even including those aspects of the events which showed Agabus to be slightly wrong at some points.

The remaining difficulty with this interpretation of the text, however, is the introductory phrase Agabus uses, "Thus says the Holy Spirit . . ." There are three solutions that might be proposed for this:

- (a) Agabus claimed a divine authority of actual words for his prophecy, and the minor discrepancies are not sufficient to nullify that claim, for he was generally correct.

In this case Agabus will be seen as an example of a prophet who is different from the prophets in 1 Corinthians. He will be more like the first type of prophet, such as John in Revelation, who claims an absolute divine authority.

My own problem with this view is that I find it hard to reconcile with the Old Testament pattern of precise fulfillment of prophecies

(strictly speaking, Agabus predicted two events which "did not come to pass," Deut. 18:22) and with the fact that Luke so clearly describes the non-fulfillment of the two parts of the prophecy in the immediately subsequent narrative.

(b) "Thus says the Holy Spirit" means here not that the very words of the prophecy were from the Holy Spirit but only that the content generally had been revealed by the Spirit. In this case Acts 21:10-11 would fit the pattern of prophecy in 1 Corinthians.

A similar example of a "prophecy" which is then summarized—but with markedly altered content—as something "the Holy Spirit" was "saying" is found in Ignatius's *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 7:1-2 (about A.D. 108). The prophecy itself, given by Ignatius, said, "Give heed to the bishop, and to the presbytery and deacons." But the summary of it that Ignatius gave, after affirming that he had "no knowledge" of divisions in the church "from any human being," was this: "The Spirit was preaching, and saying this, 'Do nothing without the bishop, keep your flesh as the temple of God, love unity, flee from divisions, be imitators of Jesus Christ, as was he also of his Father.'" In this section, the phrase translated "saying this" is *legōn tade*, the same two words used by Agabus in Acts 21:11 (*tade legei*, "thus says . . ."). Yet the phrase hardly introduces a direct quotation—it is a greatly expanded interpretation. The Holy Spirit was saying "approximately this" or "something like this."

And similar examples of this phrase (Greek *tade legei*) introducing statements from "the Lord" are found in *The Epistle of Barnabas* 6:8; 9:2, and 9:5. In every case they introduce extremely free paraphrases with interpretation of the Old Testament, except in 9:5, where no Old Testament quotation at all seems to be in view. It is clearly possible, therefore, that Agabus's introductory statement meant nothing more to him than, "This is generally (or approximately) what the Holy Spirit is saying to us."

The problem with this solution is that this phrase, Greek *tade legei*, is used frequently in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) to introduce the words of the Lord in the Old Testament prophets ("Thus says the Lord . . ."). On the other hand, it is also used to introduce statements from many other people, not always with direct quotations, so perhaps it need not always signify that the actual

words of the person quoted would follow. Moreover, the exact words used by Agabus, "Thus says the Holy Spirit," are never elsewhere used to introduce Scripture or Old Testament prophetic speech which consisted of the very words of God.

(c) A third possibility is that Agabus, perhaps in trying to imitate the Old Testament prophets, or perhaps not fully understanding the nature of his prophetic gift, wrongly used an introductory statement that was inappropriate to his status as a prophet with lesser authority. The statement might have given the impression that he was speaking the very words of God while in fact he was not. Since we know very little else about Agabus, it would be precarious to conclude that such a misunderstanding of his role would have been impossible. And Luke does seem almost to point out the mistakes in his prophecy. In this case his prophecy would be like those in 1 Corinthians.

The problem with this solution is that it is hard to imagine that Agabus would have been active in the Jerusalem church for several years, in the presence of several of the apostles, and still have a misunderstanding of his prophetic gift, and of the clear difference between his prophesying and the absolutely authoritative words of the apostles.

After considering these three solutions I tend to think the second one is most likely and has the least difficulties. Others, however, may find one of the other two more persuasive. In any case, this passage is one of the more difficult to classify in one category or the other.

EVIDENCE FROM OTHER NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

Matthew 10:19-20

In this passage Jesus says:

When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you (Matt. 10:19-20, RSV).

If this passage is understood to refer to New Testament prophecy, then it clearly belongs in the category of prophecy which is thought to have a divine authority of actual words. Verse 20 ("for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you") makes this