

Misled
(A book survey of Allen Parr's "Misled")
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What About Prophecy and Prophets
Part 1

I. THE HARM CAUSED BY FALSE PROPHETS

A prophetic experience typically looks something like this: A self-proclaimed prophet speaks a prophetic word over someone's life or over different people in a group setting.

They get their hopes up, believing that God has something special in store for them. Then they wait expectantly.

But when enough time passes and they finally realize nothing is happening, they start to get angry – not at the prophet but at God.

They conclude that God must have failed them.

II. WHAT IS THE GIFT OF PROPHECY?

A. Prophecy of the Old Testament

A priest spoke to God on behalf of the people, among other duties.

The office of prophet, involved speaking to the people on behalf of God, and the prophetic messages usually had one or more of the following purposes.

--Prophets Exposed Sinful Practices

"I will remove your carved images and sacred pillars from you so that you will no longer worship the work of your hands." Micah 5:13

"I will pronounce my judgments against them for all the evil they did when they abandoned me to burn incense to other gods and to worship the works of their own hands." Jeremiah 1:16

"Woe to him who says to wood: Wake up! or to mute stone: Come alive! Can it teach? Look! It may be plated with gold and silver, yet there is no breath in it at all." Habakkuk 2:19

“When you offer your gifts, sacrificing your children in the fire, you still continue to defile yourselves with all your idols today. So should I let you inquire of me, house of Israel? As I live—this is the declaration of the Lord GOD—I will not let you inquire of me!” Ezekiel 20:31

“They have built the high places of Baal in Ben Hinnom Valley to sacrifice their sons and daughters in the fire to Molech—something I had not commanded them. I had never entertained the thought that they do this detestable act causing Judah to sin!” Jeremiah 32:35

“Learn to do what is good. Pursue justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow’s cause.” Isaiah 1:17

“The LORD brings this charge against the elders and leaders of his people: “You have devastated the vineyard. The plunder from the poor is in your houses. ¹⁵ Why do you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor?” This is the declaration of the Lord GOD of Armies.” Isaiah 3:14-15

“They trample the heads of the poor on the dust of the ground and obstruct the path of the needy. A man and his father have sexual relations with the same girl, profaning my holy name.” Amos 2:7

--Prophets Called People to Repentance

“Even now—this is the LORD’s declaration—turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. ¹³ Tear your hearts, not just your clothes, and return to the LORD your God. For he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and he relents from sending disaster. ¹⁴ Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave a blessing behind him, so you can offer a grain offering and a drink offering to the LORD your God.” Joel 2:12-14

“Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. ² Take words of repentance with you and return to the LORD. Say to him, “Forgive all our iniquity and accept what is good, so that we may repay you with praise from our lips.” Hosea 14:1-2

--Prophets Warned People of Impending Danger

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman over the house of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, give them a warning from me. ¹⁸ If I say to the wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ but you do not warn him—you don’t speak out to warn him about his wicked way in order to save his life—that wicked person will die for his iniquity. Yet I will hold you responsible for his blood. ¹⁹ But if you warn a wicked person and he does not turn from his wickedness or his

wicked way, he will die for his iniquity, but you will have rescued yourself. Ezekiel 3:17-19

“At one moment I might announce concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will uproot, tear down, and destroy it. ⁸ However, if that nation about which I have made the announcement turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the disaster I had planned to do to it.” Jeremiah 18:7-8

“Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, ‘In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!’” Jonah 3:4

--How Were Prophets Regarded?

Prophets today are often revered, respected, and admired.

But the way modern-day prophets are regarded is starkly different from how Old Testament prophets were viewed.

Amos was told to go away. “Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Go away, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. Earn your living and give your prophecies there,” Amos 7:12

Jeremiah was beaten and imprisoned. “The officials were angry at Jeremiah and beat him and placed him in jail in the house of Jonathan the scribe, for it had been made into a prison.” Jeremiah 37:15

B. Prophecy in the New Testament

“Has the gift of prophecy ceased?”

Those who believe the gift of prophecy has ceased often support their position by referencing

1 Corinthians 13:8-12. “Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside childish things. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known.”

Those who believe the gift of prophecy has ceased (known as cessationists) support their view by interpreting “the perfect” as the perfect for completed) New Testament.

Those who believe the gift of prophecy continues today (continuationists) usually believe the word *perfect* refers to Jesus and His second coming.

--The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament

One question that scholars debate is whether prophecy is limited to providing *new* revelation or could include the explanation of *existing* revelation.

Luke 1:67-79

“Both were righteous in God’s sight, living without blame according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.” “Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: ⁶⁸ Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and provided redemption for his people. ⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰ just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets in ancient times; ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of those who hate us. ⁷² He has dealt mercifully with our ancestors and remembered his holy covenant—⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant that we, ⁷⁴ having been rescued from the hand of our enemies, would serve him without fear ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days. ⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. ⁷⁸ Because of our God’s merciful compassion, the dawn from on high will visit us ⁷⁹ to shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

“The content of what he said was not new revelation but rather the announcement that certain promises found in the Old Testament were about to be fulfilled.” The Blue Letter Bible

“ On the other hand, the person who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation.” 1 Corinthians 14:3

Should the gift of prophecy be limited to church leaders? Scripture doesn’t support that conclusion.

“This man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.” Acts 21:9

Prophets exists today in that they take the existing word and apply it to life.

“A third category for the ‘spiritual gift of prophecy’-Spirit-prompted, Spirit sustained, revelation-rooted, but mixed with human imperfections and fallibility and therefore in need of sifting.” John Piper

If the New Testament prophets were infallible, there would have been no need for Paul to command the church to “evaluate” and “test” the prophecies of its members.

“Don’t despise prophecies, ²¹ but test all things. Hold on to what is good.” 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21

“Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should evaluate.” 1 Corinthians 14:29

Paul equates the NT gift of prophecy with teaching.

--Prophecy as New Revelation

We see several examples of this in the New Testament. Consider the prophecy at Agabus in the book of Acts:

“One of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. This took place during the reign of Claudius.” Acts 11:28

“After we had been there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ He came to us, took Paul’s belt, tied his own feet and hands, and said, ‘This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him over to the Gentiles.’” Acts 21:10-11

Allan Parr believes

“Do I believe that God can use someone to speak a word beyond what’s explicitly stated in the Scriptures, a word that can encourage and provide insight and wisdom to a fellow believer?”

“Yes, I do. Do I believe that God is using people today to provide a general authoritative message to the body of Christ as *new revelation* that’s not found in the Bible? No, not at all. To assert this would violate the principle of *sola scriptura*: the canon is closed and Scripture provides all that is needed for life and godliness.”

The bottom Line

Prophecy today is primarily geared toward *forthtelling* (a Spirit-empowered teaching of God's truth as revealed in the Scriptures) or providing especially insightful words of truth and wisdom that may not be explicitly contained in Scripture but are consistent with it and provide special encouragement to the hearer.

II. FALSE PROPHETS

"because both prophet and priest are ungodly, even in my house I have found their evil. This is the LORD's declaration. ¹² Therefore, their way will seem like slippery paths in the gloom. They will be driven away and fall down there, for I will bring disaster on them, the year of their punishment. This is the LORD's declaration." Jeremiah 23:11-12

"This is what the LORD of Armies says: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They are deluding you. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the LORD's mouth." Jeremiah 23:16

Many false prophets are preying on people's desires and promising them things they know those people want to hear.

"For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear." 2 Timothy 4:3

Many of the people who claim to be prophets are not really prophets.

"The prophet who presumes to speak a message in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods—that prophet must die.' ²¹ You may say to yourself, 'How can we recognize a message the LORD has not spoken?' ²² When a prophet speaks in the LORD's name, and the message does not come true or is not fulfilled, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him." Deuteronomy 18:20-22

Close:

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