

What is “Prophecy”?

©2023 Mike Whyte

Copyright Notice: this document may be used freely for personal study, preaching, and teaching.

No part of it may be used under any circumstances for commercial purposes or to attain personal gain or advantage.

The primary purpose of the Old Testament prophets was to convict ancient Israel of its sins and bring the people back to true worship of God (2Kg17:13). Jesus affirmed that the main focus of predictive prophecy is his life and work (Lk24:44). The Apostle Paul asserts that all prophecy is trumped by “love” – everything else will pass away (1Cr13:8-10).

The Nature of Prophecy: there are two aspects to prophecy: **forthtelling** – teaching the Way of God; and, **foretelling** – predicting, stating what will happen in the future (Jr35:15, 17a, 34:21a). The fundamental role of a “prophet” is to **speak for God**: to relay the words of God to the intended hearers (Ex6:28-30, 7:1-2, 4:13-16).

Foretelling: The Creator God inhabits eternity; he exists outside of time and space as we can physically observe them; the physical universe is an object he can hold in his hand – **this allows God to determine what the future will be** (Is40:12, 46:9b-10, 11b). **Many instances of short-term foretelling** are recorded in the historical books of the Bible; mostly they are very specific and relate to current events as God was dealing with the nation of Israel (2Chr12:5, 9a). This kind of foretelling also occurred in the New Testament (At21:10-11).

The Main Focus of Foretelling: The writing prophets contain innumerable prophecies of **the life and work of the Messiah** – both the First Advent and the Second Advent (Mt1:18, 21-23, Is7:10-14, Jh6:43-48, Is54:1b, 5, 13). The **New Testament authors are unanimous** in applying Old Testament prophecies to the life and work of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Mk1:1-3, Lk4:17-22, At3:18-24, Rm1:1-3a, 1Pt1:10-12a).

Long-term Foretelling: These prophecies provide the outline of the Plan of God:

The Protoevangelium: Genesis 3:15 The promises to Abraham: Genesis 12:1-7 etc. The symbolism of the Passover: Exodus 12:1-13 The Covenant of Performance: Exodus 34:10-27 The symbolism of the sacrificial system: Leviticus chapters 1 through 7 and 16 Moses’ prophecy of the Second Exodus and the New Covenant: Deuteronomy 30:1-6	All the Psalms that look to the World Tomorrow Isaiah’s prophecies: 4:1-6, 7:14, 9:6-7, 11:1-16, 24:1-23, 25:6-12, 26:1-12, 19-21, 27:1-6 etc. Jeremiah’s prophecies: 3:11-18, 16:4-21, 23:1-8, 25:30-33, 30:18-24, 31:8-9, 31-37 etc. Daniel’s revelations and visions: chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 Minor Prophets: Hosea 2:16-23, 14:4-9, Amos 9:11-15, Micah 4:1-5, Zephaniah 3:9-20 etc. The Olivet Prophecy: Mark 13:1-31, Matthew 24:1-35, Luke 21:5-32 The Book of Revelation
---	--

Forthtelling: is **proclaiming the teaching of God** concerning his requirements for True Worshipers. Almost always where “foretelling” occurs it is accompanied by “forthtelling” (Jr26:2-6). The Bible is the complete record of the teaching God has given us (Rv19:10b). **The Book of Revelation is structured around “forthtelling”** (Rv1:1-4a, 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21, 7:13-14, 8:3, 9:20-21, 10:7-11, 11:6-7a, 12:17, 13:8, 14:1-5, 12, 15:2-4, 17:14, 19:7-9, 21:7, 22:3b, 7b).

“Predictive prophecies” cannot be “kept”. To **“keep what is written”** means to **live by the Way of God**.

The Purpose of the Church: God created the Church through the Apostles, who were prepared for the task by Jesus Christ (Mt24:14, 28:18-20). The Apostles did not at first understand their purpose (Jh20:9, 21:3a, At1:6). **The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was required before the Apostles understood** (Jh14:25-26, 16:12-13a). **The purpose of the Church is to “prophecy”, to preach the gospel, to teach the Way of God as specified in the Bible.** Our understanding can only come through the lead of the Holy Spirit in studying **what the Bible actually says**, NOT what we would “like it to say”, certainly NOT what someone says it says (Am3:7-8).

What is the Church? “We believe that the Church is that body of believers who have received and are being led by the Holy Spirit. **The true Church of God is a spiritual organism.**” (Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God, page 49) The “Church” is a spiritual organism defined by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rm8:9-10). **Only God knows who has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The “Church” is NOT confined to any physical organization. The primary purpose of “prophecy” is “forthtelling”** – that is the purpose of the “Church” to which we have been called. “Foretelling” has to be understood for what it is: **“predictions”, are there to support “forthtelling”**. Predictions are not an end in themselves (2Pt1:19-21, 2:2-3a). **“Predictions” will pass away, love will NOT** (1Cr13:8-9, 1Pt1:10).

We need to **NOT focus on the “predictive” aspects of prophecy** – different understandings are irrelevant. The Teaching of God with regard to salvation, is clear, unequivocal, and beyond doubt. **Our job as part of the “Church” is to preach the gospel** – we need to understand the Plan of God and live by the Way of God and **teach it to the world**. **“When the perfect comes”** our understanding of “prophetic” predictions will NOT matter: **God is Love – “love never ends”**.

The Power Point slides of this presentation are located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/presentations>