24 - Keys to Accurate Prophecy

How do we know if a prophecy is inaccurate? The first, most obvious way is if it contradicts scripture. If someone prophesies, “I, the Lord thy God, want you to get as drunk as possible and rob a bank!”, that should ring some alarm bells. It contradicts Eph. 4:28 regarding not stealing. That prophecy obviously comes from the flesh or the wrong spirit! That prophesier needs retraining and/or duct tape! The point is – if the prophecy utterance is given by God, it will not contradict the Bible – ever. Even if the message is given emotionally, powerfully and convincingly, if it fails the scripture threshold, it fails! We know God inspired the Bible and He will not contradict Himself in prophecy, but Satan and our flesh will. And we’ve had enough of them and know where they lead - to disaster. Pass!

Another way we know if a prophecy is inaccurate is “in our gut”. In other words, God will tell us. Why? Because He loves us! He will witness with us one way or the other. The One who is big enough to give a saint a message to speak is big enough to also confirm or deny that message to us individually. God confirms His word to us. For some of us “we know”. For others, it’s a gut feeling. For some it might be the sound of a bell or a visual sign. For others, another kind of feeling one way or another. If God is asking something of you that will cost you significantly (in time, effort, resources, reputation, etc.), He knows we need confirmation from Him before we put ourselves at risk to obey. Gideon had the same concern and God put his fears to bed with His confirmation. He does the same for us.

Another way we know if a prophecy (or revelation) is accurate and from God is by independent confirmation from others.

2 Cor. 13:1b

By the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter will be established.

If someone prophesies, “Buy banana options today, stock sign ‘BANA’, past returns don’t guarantee future results, saith the Lord”, it is wise for the hearer to discuss this specific info prophecy with others if there are questions to its accuracy. (There should be!) Sometimes we are emotionally involved in the focal point of a prophecy, and we need some ‘clear eyed’ counsel to discern its genuineness. In addition, any urgent prophetic exhortation that doesn’t allow time for reflective counsel from others is also suspect. God is not in the business of scaring us into action unless we have been stiff-arming His counsel, which should be recognized at the time of the repeated exhortation. Speaking of which …

God Usually Tells Us First Directly

Another way we know if a prophecy is accurate is if it confirms what God has already told us. Usually, God tells us something first before he tells someone else to tell us. Why? Because He loves us! If you saw your child heading into trouble, what kind of parent would you be if you kept silent? Would you wait for someone else to warn your child? God is - at least - as loving as we are, right? He informs us of big blessings and dangers, right? Do we listen? Sometimes. When we are hardheaded or not paying attention, He has others tell us, too. This can take the form of prophecy many times. Check this out.

Acts 20:17,18,22

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church.

And when they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in the province of Asia, how I was with you all the time,

And now, look, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the spirit, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

When the apostle Paul spoke to the Ephesian church elders, he told them that he was going to Jerusalem and “didn’t know” what would happen to him… except … .

Acts 20:23

except that the Holy Spirit warns me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

He didn’t know “what to expect”? Sure, he did. “Bonds and afflictions”. God had told him first and he was “bound in the spirit”. Then God confirmed the consequences of his going to Jerusalem by prophecy in the churches he visited on his way there. Am I saying that the great apostle Paul, the one to whom God revealed the Sacred Secret, was ignoring and disobeying God? No, the scripture is saying that. Why?

Acts 20:24

But I consider my life worth nothing to myself, if only I can finish my course, and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the good news of the grace of God.

Paul “considered his life worth nothing to himself”. God disagreed. He thought Paul’s life was still worth a lot to Him and wanted Paul to protect it, not cut it short or limit it by walking into a political buzz saw. Paul was ready to “cash in his chips” and quit. God was trying to talk one of the greatest “baseball players ever out of retiring”, to use my baseball analogy. Because of free will, God had to allow Paul’s choices whether He agreed with them or not. So, Paul kept going to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:3,4

And when we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre, for the ship was to unload her cargo there.

And having found the disciples, we stayed there seven days. And through the spirit they repeatedly told Paul that he should not set foot in Jerusalem.

The “disciples told Paul through the spirit that he should not set foot in Jerusalem”. One of the biggest differences between the first century church and the church today is that we would put Paul on a stage today and rubber stamp whatever “the Bishop, Reverand Paul, PhD, Sanhedrin Emeritus”, wanted to do. We would collect money to help his cause. Too many Christians see leaders as the pinnacle of the church. The early church saw Christ as the head and weren’t afraid of telling a former sinner like them what the Boss says. This is prophecy. A word from our Sponsor. And Paul – and other leaders – were not the Sponsor.

Acts 21:8-9

And on the next day we departed, and came to Caesarea, and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.

Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied.

Were Philip’s daughters all prophetesses? No, they were certain disciples like us and the others that had been telling Paul to stay away from Jerusalem. This is more indication that we can all prophesy, and that it might include specific info and direction.

Acts 21:10-12

And as we stayed there some days, a certain prophet came down from Judea, named Agabus.

And coming to us, and taking Paul’s belt, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, “This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man that owns this belt, and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”

And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

To persuade Paul, God finally brings in the professional to confront Paul in front of many. Notice how elaborate his prophecy was. It was words paired with a physical example. Agabus threw a 90 mile an hour fastball at Paul’s heart. Paul watched it go by and struck out. He was done. Paul had no problem with all the prophecies from all the saints or the prophet from Jerusalem. He had a problem with the message. And really the problem he had was with what God wanted. He didn’t want to do it. He wanted out of the fight.

If this section makes you queasy and you think I’m shaming Paul, I assure you I’m not. Welcome to free will. Welcome to the world God inhabits daily. People accept and reject God daily. Saints also accept God’s guidance daily and reject it, too. God must work around this. That’s why He has a plan A, and a plan B, and plans to Z to the millionth power. Because He’s love, He always wants the best for us despite our ineptness. Although Paul wanted to “cash in his chips” in Acts 21, he had been quite the winner with God for decades previously. Certainly, God saw it and will reward him accordingly. Don’t worry, God knows how to “focus on the baby and throw out the bathwater”.

As I prepare this sharing there is a brilliant man ending his volunteer job heading up the “Department of Government Efficiency”, D.O.G.E. He began promising to cut 1 trillion dollars of waste off the US budget but was only able to find $170 billion in spending cuts. The opposition party hates him, tacitly approving violence against his businesses, and now publicly derides his falling short of his goal.

It is hard to describe the sickness that inhabits this mindset. Instead of celebrating the elimination of $170 billion of fraud, waste, and abuse of OUR money, they focus on the difference between the optimistic goal and the underrealized result. Instead of thankfulness that an ultra-successful businessman and entrepreneur worked for free for almost 1/3 of a year for us, they want to deride and destroy him. Some of the leaders in the opposition party have even characterized this man as “stupid” publicly! This is the same man who built a huge internet financial service business, a space rocket company that rivals NASA, a satellite-based internet provider, the largest electric car company in the world, and revived an immense failing and partisan social media platform! He’s stupid?

His accusers are either liars, lunatics, or dumber than a stump. Perhaps all three!

This sick attitude can find its way into the church. We are tempted to fixate on worthless sin or mistakes while losing focus or minimizing the value of God’s involvement. Perhaps it’s God’s fault! (I say sarcastically.) He’s made prophecy so simple and effortless that it’s easy to take it for granted and instead fixate or any mistakes. That is crazy – literally. In prophecy, we are hearing from our Lord Jesus or Almighty God! The reason God made it practically fool proof is because … we’re fools! ‘Easy’ does not mean worthless. Just ask anyone with a breathing disorder if a breath is worthless. It is precious and the very foundation of our lives. Prophecy is similar. It is the building up we need in a corrosive world, the exhortation we crave in a discouraging system, and the comfort we ache for in a merciless universe. Hearing from God in prophecy should be the highlight of any day!

Now what happens if we hear a word, a phrase, a sentence, or some sentences that don’t ring true? We slug the manifester in the kisser, right? No, we do what God says, “hold on firmly to what is good”. What do we do with the inaccurate, fleshy part? We don’t hold on to it firmly – we let it go. We let the bathwater go down the drain where it belongs! And we also forgive the imperfect manifester, as God for Christ’s sake forgave us. If we don’t do these things, we’ll start to “despise prophecies”, developing the same sick attitude that the opposition party has. Which brings up a story…

“Each afternoon Grandpa would lie down for a nap. One day, as a practical joke, the kids decided to put Limburger cheese (very smelly cheese) in his moustache. Quite soon he awoke sniffing. ‘Why, this room stinks!’ he exclaimed, as he got up and went out into the kitchen. He wasn’t there long until he decided that the kitchen smelled too, so he walked outdoors for a breath of fresh air. Much to Grandpa’s surprise, the open air brought no relief, and he proclaimed, ‘The whole world stinks!’ No, it was just his upper lip!”

We don’t want to be like this grandpa. We want to keep our mustache and attitude clear. Although the world is challenging, with Christ we are more than conquerors. The devil stinks and we steer clear of him and all his influences best we can.

Avoiding Prophecy

Because of the possibility (or probability) of flesh slipping in, the manifestations and ministries (which we address later) need accountability. A way churches have addressed errors in manifesting is to avoid manifesting all together. In other words, there will not be any potential wrong prophecies if there are no prophecies, right? The result is – no one gets hurt. BUT ALSO – no one gets blessed! Pretty lousy tradeoff when you think about it. Whole denominations have adopted this position. Basically, they think the manifestations are not worth the trouble they bring, so chuck ‘em! Long ago I went to a Bible school (which is now a graduate seminary) which taught us that the manifestations died with the apostles. When I confronted someone with scripture …

1 Cor. 14:39

So then, my brothers and sisters, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid anyone to speak in tongues.

I was told that when the Bible was assembled in the centuries after Christ, there was no more need for tongues and prophecy. So, we shouldn’t speak in tongues or prophesy. I remember asking, “But the Bible says not to forbid speaking in tongues and isn’t that what you’re doing?” The response was, “That was for then, not now. Speaking in tongues causes trouble and division in the church and distracts from our mission of evangelizing the world.”

These men were spiritual giants to me, but on this, they were as wrong as rain on the moon. Tongues and prophecy didn’t “die with the apostles” although that seems to be the theological position of a lot of Christianity. There are no errors in the manifestations of the spirit in these churches because there are no manifestations. And many are proud of that fact. They say that speaking in tongues is counterfeit, fake or a psychological delusion.

I have two problems with those ideas. #1. I speak in tongues and prophesy and know hundreds of other saints that do also. I am not psychologically deluded (as far as you know! Just kidding!) This theological position is as crazy as the Emperor’s New Clothes fable. It’s denying what is clearly right before our eyes. It’s sort of like the US news media saying that Joe Biden was mentally and physically sharp while we watched him trip up and down stairs and wander away from world leaders during a group photo. “What are you going to believe, me or your lying eyes?” the media tried to bully the audience. You know, it’s easy to believe a lie if that’s what you want to believe. The desire itself puts you halfway there. Millions throughout the world speak in tongues and prophesy and theologians have their hands over their eyes and ears, repeating “Nothing to see here!”. I think they want to believe that because it leads to the second reason why they “quench the spirit”.

“Control” is the second reason why I believe so much of the modern church ignores tongues and prophecy. Did you notice all the saints correcting Paul in prophecy as he was going to Jerusalem? The leaders of most denominations don’t want that. They want to be “the Pope”, the “Bishop”, the “Priest”, the “Reverand” – in other words, the head of the church. Hold on – are they? NOOOOOOO!

Eph 1:20-23

that he worked in Christ when he raised him from among the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

far above every ruler and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come;

and he put all things in subjection under his feet and appointed him as the head over all things related to the church,

which is his body—the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

For far too long Christian leadership has sailed the church into the rocks when they thought they were right because they thought that they were the ultimate authority. We are not (and I include myself) the ultimate authority. Christ is the head, no one else. So, when a leader gets a crazy idea and tries to steer the church towards the rocks in the shallows, prophecy allows the Lord to help the wayward leader reconsider, just as it helps us all.

Now, when leaders get corrected it’s a mess, almost guaranteed. To lead it takes a disciplined focused mind. Correction introduces an alternative viewpoint. Although it’s not immediately welcome, the meek leader will consider it and recognize God’s voice and change direction. The unmeek leader will march into the buzzsaw as Paul did and take others with him who also disregard the prophecy also. In Acts, Paul was the only one imprisoned because of his stubbornness. Everyone else loved him but knew what the will of God was. It was “Paul, don’t go to Jerusalem.” Those who went with him knew the prophecy was not to them, only to the one whom Agabus indicated. They went because they loved Paul but didn’t share the consequences of his disobedience.

In the spiritually “stomber” (that’s a word I’m coining combining “stuffy” and “somber”) Christian denominations, I think they illogically explain away the manifestations to keep conflict and exhortation in manageable levels. It’s all about control. They are wrong. God want Christ to be the “Big Dog”, not them. And prophecy is one way the “Big Dog barks”!

Heb. 10:24,25

And let us consider one another, to spur one another on to love and good works,

not abandoning our meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but exhorting one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

When we meet together, we are to “spur one another on to love and good works”. Do you know what a spur is?



It’s the wheel on the back of a boot that the rider uses to get the horse moving forward. Do we need “spurring”? You bet! We would sit on our spiritual gluteus maxima forever if the flesh got its way. God wants us to walk with Him. Walking implies movement. Is the gathered church supposed to provide that? Sure. How? Certainly, through fellowship, teaching and prayer. But let me suggest that an important component in “iron sharpening iron” is prophecy. And when iron sharpens iron, sparks fly at times. It’s not comfortable to get off our butts. It takes energy and courage to walk with God. We are to be ambassadors for Christ, not in “the Witness Protection Program”! Too many Christians are attenders, not believers. They need spurring. They need prophecy. The denominational leaders fear serious exhortation where sparks fly because attenders might be offended and they could lose members, money, influence, etc. Who’s the head of that group? Sorry, not the Lord.

More Prophecy Keys

Personal prophesy usually brings confirmation and witness to what God Has already told us. Our first responsibility is to hear from God ourselves. Prophecy isn’t a substitute for that. It’s not like we should quit having our quiet time or devotions between us and God and expect that group or personal prophecy will fill that need. It’s us and God first.

Ps. 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God;

He wants to talk to each of us. Prophecy is an augmentation and supplement for that.

Although God usually tells us first before telling others to tell us, sometimes God can’t get through to us. A prophecy may seem to be out of the blue to us, but it will prove genuine when we live the exhortation and see it proven. Sometimes I think God tells me something through another saint and then, as I’m doing what He asks, He reminds me of what He initially told me and when. I realize that I shut down the original exhortation as crazy, or stupid, or too hard. So, although the message from a saint seemed like it was the first I heard of it, it turned out to be a divine “rerun”! I had just fallen spiritually asleep during the first broadcast. And guess what? When performed, the promise still held, and God honored the blessed result. He is faithful Who promised!