

The Word of Prophecy Made More Certain

Old and New Testament Prophecy Fulfilled in Christ and the Kingdom of God, the Church

1. The Foundation of True Prophecy

Prophecy is the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God. While it may be predictive, foretelling the future, this is not the primary meaning. According to Vine, prophecy “is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means, Matt 26:68, it is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future.” (From Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

The primary thesis of this study is that God’s mystery and all prophecy finds its fulfillment in Christ and the kingdom of God, the church. This fulfillment of God’s mystery was the consummation of God’s eternal purpose in Christ according to Eph 1:9-10:

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring **all things** in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. [Emphasis added.]

Paul stated the mystery of God’s will in a few easy-to-understand words in Eph 3:6: “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

That God brought all things together under Christ leaves no room for modern additions or changes to God’s eternal purpose, whether they be offered by denominational actions, ecclesiastic decree, supposedly latter day revelations, or any other utterances or dictums from the mind of man. God brought all things together in Christ, the eternal savior, and the church, the eternal kingdom of God. Eph 1:18-23 makes clear that *all things* are the specifics of this consummation of God’s eternal purpose with nothing held back:

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

This study will traverse the Old and New Testament prophecies, showing the fulfillment of these true principles of God’s eternal purpose:

God’s mighty strength raised Christ from the dead.

God’s mighty strength seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

Christ sits far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given now and forever more.

God placed all things under his feet.

God appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

The church is his body the fullness of Christ.

Christ fills everything in every way.

All of these are the be all and end all of God's revelation to man. The certainty of a savior offered; a church established; an eternal king, victorious on his throne in God's kingdom; and a victory over sin and death and the devil, beast, and false prophet. If this scripture be true, God holds no event in abeyance against some time future to this victory in Christ Jesus. Nor can there be any circumstances where the coming and offering of the Christ failed to make the word of prophesy more sure.

God Has Spoken

To study seriously the efficacy of God's prophecies, one must first believe that God has authoritatively spoken his will in the scriptures. In so many places, the Bible has affirmed with certainty that God spoke through Christ, that to reject the fulfillment of these utterances is to reject the Bible as God's word.

Heb 1:1-2 asserts that God spoke through the prophets, but in these last days, he spoke through Jesus:

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

God also spoke with certainty in Matt 17:5, when he told the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration to listen to Jesus, the son of God: "5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

The Apostles and Prophets the Foundation of God's Household

While Jesus was still living among the apostles, he promised them the power of the Holy Spirit, which would enable them to speak with certainty the eternal truths of God's will. According to John 14:26, this inspiration was inclusive of *all things* and everything: "26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." As if to make this principle certain, Jesus reiterated it in John 16:13-15, making the apostles and prophets the certain and only bearers of the word of the Lord:

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

In Eph 2:19-22, Paul showed how the apostles and prophets, to whom this power of revelation came, were the foundation of God's household, God's building, the temple of the Lord, and the dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit:

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The apostles and prophets, given this immutable power through the Holy Spirit, received a final charge from the Lord, in Matt 28:18-20, to teach **everything** commanded by the Lord:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Everything I have commanded you is an all-inclusive qualifier of the apostles and prophets as spokespersons for God and the Lord Jesus Christ; as such, it mutually excludes all new voices, latter day ages utterances and expanding theologies. No person, organization, denomination, or even the angels of heaven can change the word of the apostles and prophets Gal 1:6-9:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

Modern denominations and latter day sectarians pervert the gospel, turning to their different gospels, claiming inspiration by the Spirit or delivery by angels. While Paul, here, limited the revelation of the gospel to the gospel preached by the apostles and prophets, Jude limited the faith to the one **once for all** entrusted to the saints in Jude 3:

"3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."

Based on these scriptures, the warning of John, specific to the *Revelation*, may be generalized to all who would add to or take away from the revelation given to the apostles and prophets. The eternal condemnation pronounced by Paul becomes universal, and John's curses and plagues (which are eternal condemnation) become universal. John wrote in Rev 22:18-19:

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

No one has the right to alter the inspired word of the apostles and prophets.

The Mystery Made Known by Revelation

Since by the Spirit, the inspired apostles and prophets revealed the complete revelation of God, how does that which they receive come to us? Paul explained how the true and certain and only revelation came to us by reading the written word of the inspired apostles and prophets in Eph 3:2-6:

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the **mystery made known** to me by **revelation**, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, **you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ**, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has **now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets**. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

This passage is unequivocal in establishing the *what* of revelation and the *who* of revelation. *What of revelation* is God's mystery described in verse 6: 6 "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers

together in the promise in Christ Jesus." *Who* of revelation is found in verse 5: "It has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets."

When the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and prophets on the day of Pentecost, Peter claimed emphatically "this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel." Joel had pointed to the specifics of God's revelation through the apostles and prophets on that day, confirmed in fulfillment by Peter who said, "This is what was spoken." Thus, Acts 2:16-18, confirms the apostles and prophets as the sole source of New Testament prophecy:

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

No One Knows the Thoughts of God except the Spirit of God

Paul told us how the mystery came to us from the apostles and prophets in Eph 3:2-6, cited above. He also told us how it came to the apostles in such a singular and certain way that no one else ever could claim the power—not ecclesiastics or clerics, not churches or denominations, not latter day prophets or angels. 1Cor 2:10-13

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

In reverse order, the apostles and prophets received the spiritual truths of God in spiritual words of God. The Spirit taught the apostles and prophets these spiritual truths and spiritual words. The entire purpose was that the apostles and prophets might understand what God freely gave them. The only way one can know the mystery of God is by the Spirit of God, which came only to the apostles and prophets.

One cannot make up or divine the will of God separate from the Spirit of God telling what the deep things of God are. It has been this way from the beginning. When Pharaoh's butler and cupbearer sought the interpretation of their dreams from Joseph, Joseph revealed an eternal truth about prophecy in Gen 40:8:

8 "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them."

Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

The interpretations of God's prophecies, dreams, and visions belong to God. Man is not free to render the deep things of God, as he might like in his own mind and imaginings. Later, in Gen 41:8, Pharaoh had difficulty with interpreting his dreams:

8 In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

When Pharaoh called on Joseph to help him, Joseph answered forever the question of who holds the deep meanings of God, whether the meaning of visions, dreams, or prophecies. In Gen 41:15-16, Joseph answered emphatically:

15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

Modern man cannot do it either, for the answer is in the mind of God. Moses went on to write in Gen 41:32: "32 The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon." When He gives visions, dreams, and prophecies, God has firmly decided the meaning. People are not and have never been free to decide the meaning at the pleasure of their human thoughts and imagination.

How Prophecy Comes to Man

If man cannot make up interpretations and meanings for prophecies in the Old and New Testaments, from where do they come? Peter has answered this question for us. In 2 Peter 1:19-21, he wrote:

19 And we have the word of the prophets **made more certain**, and you will do well to **pay attention** to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, **you must understand that no prophecy** of Scripture came about by the **prophet's own interpretation**. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the **will of man**, but men spoke **from God** as they were carried along **by the Holy Spirit**. [Emphasis added.]

No prophecy ever had its interpretation by the prophet; nor did any prophecy have its origin in the will of man; prophets speak from God as the Holy Spirit moves them. The statement by Peter is all-inclusive of the will of God and all-exclusive of the will of man.

Conclusion

From these scriptures, people come to know that neither prophesy nor its interpretation comes by the will of man, but by the will of God. When the prophets of old, such as Joel, prophesy, the scriptures must interpret the prophecies. When the apostles and prophets of the New Testament prophesy, the scriptures must interpret the prophecies. Since there are many false prophets afoot in the world, there can be no other way to the truth of God's word. Prophecies and interpretation must be from that *faith delivered once for all*. Indeed, prophecies and their interpretations belong to God alone.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:9-10: In whom did God purpose the good pleasure of his will? To whom did God make known his pleasure?
2. Eph 3:20-23: Where is Christ now? Describe the power God gave to Christ. Of what is Christ head? What is another name for the church? What is the fullness of Christ?
3. Matt 28:18-20: Who has all authority? What are the apostles to teach? What are baptized believers to obey?

4. Heb 1:1-2: Through whom does God speak in these last days? When did God speak to the forefathers? How did God speak to the forefathers?
5. John 16:13-15: Into what was the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles? From whom does the Holy Spirit get that which he speaks?
6. Eph 2:19-22: Who is the chief cornerstone of the household of God? Upon what foundation is the household of God built? Can you find two other names for the household of God?
7. Gal 1:6-9: What is no gospel at all? What was causing confusion? What happens to an apostle or an angel in heaven if they preach a gospel other than the one preached by the apostles?
8. Jude 3: What was once for all delivered? For what are Christians to contend?
9. Rev 22:18-19: What happens to those who add to the words of prophecy? What happens to those who take away from the words of prophecy?
10. Eph 3:2-6: How was the mystery of God made known to Paul? What did Paul do with the revelation? What will we be able to understand when we read what Paul wrote? What has now been revealed by the Spirit? To whom has it been revealed?
11. Acts 2:16-21: What was spoken of by the prophet Joel? When was Joel's prophecy fulfilled?
12. 1 Cor 2:10-13: Who searches the deep things of God? Who knows the thoughts of God? Who taught the apostles the words of God? In what did the apostles and prophets express spiritual truths?
13. Gen 41:15-16: Who interprets dreams, visions, and prophecy?
14. Gen 41:32: Who firmly decides the meaning of dreams, visions, and prophecies?
15. 2 Peter 1:19-21: What is made more certain? To what are we to pay attention? By what does a prophecy of scripture never come? What is the origin of prophecy? From whom do men speak?