

Prophecy 101 (How to Prophecy)

1 Thess. 5:20, Is. 20:1-4, Jer. 15:15-21, Ez. 4:4-8, Rev. 19:10

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/prophecy-101-how-to-prophecy/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades, using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

[Opening song: "Comfortably Numb" by Pink Floyd]

Prayer

So, Lord God, we thank you for that song--#32 in the Presbyterian hymnal—(laughs) and this is our offering, Lord, that we confess to you that we've wrapped ourselves in fig leaves. And we've hidden from the wounds on our neighbor and on our own bodies, and we have become comfortably numb. So, Lord God, would you speak your Word to us? We ask this in Jesus's name, Amen.

Message

Video clip: "Carnac the Magnificent Predicts about Snoopy"; Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*
Carson Entertainment Group, 1976

Johnny Carson is dressed as fortune teller, playing the character of Carnac the Magnificent. He holds an envelope in his hands as he discusses his predictions with Ed McMahon to the side.

Carnac I shall devine the answer to this question.

Ed ...Having never...

Carnac Yes... (Holds envelop up to head) Snoopy and Woodstock.

Carson opens up the envelope and then reads the question written inside

Carnac Who is running the state of California while Jerry Brown is out campaigning for president?

Wouldn't it be great to be a prophet . . . like Carnac the Magnificent? You could just know stuff..

- You could be sitting at the bar, and everyone is stressed about the election, and you could just tell folks who was going to win.
- Your friend is stressed about whether or not to marry her boyfriend, and you could just tell her whether he's good or evil.
- Your boss gives you a bad job review: *"Don't cry; prophesy!"*

[Peter rubs his temples of forehead] Mmm... *"The Lord says: 'You're wrong, I'm right. And furthermore, your Daddy issues and secret drinking problem cloud your judgment.'"*

The Bible contains all sorts of prophecy, and some of the books of the Bible are written by folks who are called "prophets." Some of them are known as "major prophets," because of the length of their

books. The three longest are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and they're especially fascinating because they not only reveal *what* the prophet said, but *how* they said it and came to say it.

Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up, seated on a throne; he hears the Seraphim singing, "*the whole earth is filled with his glory*"; the foundation of the threshold trembles; a burning coal cleanses his lips. A Voice calls out saying, "*Whom shall I send?*" ...and Isaiah says, "*Here am I!*"
(...Pretty awesome, right?)

The Word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah and talks to him—a walking, talking Word who puts out his hand, touches Jeremiah's mouth, and says, "*I have set you this day over nations and kingdoms...*"
(That's awesome, don't you think?)

Ezekiel sees a glowing cloud full of wind, fire, and lightning, four living creatures with human faces, and four tremendous wheels full of eyes. And above it all, a throne; and over the throne a rainbow. And on the throne, a man—but a Man made of fire and light: The Ancient of Days; the Son of Man.
(Totally cool! Incredible!)

So, wouldn't it be great to be a prophet?

[Image: slide shows on screen the following questions:

- Wouldn't it be great to be a prophet?
- But isn't it absurd that some claim to be prophets?]

But... isn't it absurd that some claim to be prophets?

You know, this really wasn't a very good year for folks who advertise themselves as "prophets." And it seems to me, it hasn't gone too well for these folks for quite some time.

- In 1988, Edgar C. Whisenant sold 4.5 million copies of his book, *88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will be in 1988*. (1988 was one 40-year generation after the founding of the nation state called "Israel.") 300,000 copies of his book were mailed to pastors all across America.
- In 1989, he published *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989*. (89 reasons why the Rapture would happen in 1989)
- In 1993, he published a book on why the date was *actually* 1993.
- In 1994, he published one more book predicting nuclear war, total meltdown, in 1994.

End times books are a remarkably easy way to get rich, especially if you equate modern Israel with the Israel of God, quote the Revelation out of context, and include some stuff from the Olivet Discourse in Matthew and Luke...while ignoring the fact that Jesus appears to have said this stuff would all happen in one generation, and appears to actually have happened when Rome sacked Jerusalem in 70 AD.ⁱ

*"But of that day and hour, (the close of the ageⁱⁱ), no one knows"*ⁱⁱⁱ... according to Jesus.

We make all these end times maps, plotting out a path for avoiding tribulation and the End...when Jesus says, "*I am the End...*" and, "*In this world you will have tribulation.*" So, "*Pick up your cross and follow.*"

The word “rapture” doesn’t even appear in my English Bible. And no one even knew what a *pre-tribulation rapture* was until about 150 years ago in the U.S. and Britain. See? I think it’s all a bit suspect.

And now, in just the last two weeks, the mental gymnastics undertaken by supposed “prophets” who prophesied that Trump would be inaugurated on January 20—those mental gymnastics have been just astounding...and more than a bit suspect.

But now listen: many of the prophecies about Trump may have been true.

- He got elected the first time... when no one thought he would.
- God still might use him to turn the hearts of Americans toward himself—He used David that way, he used Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon that way...
- But if a prophet prophesied that Trump would be inaugurated on January 20, 2021, that prophet was wrong.

Moses prophesied, saying, “When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously.” (Deuteronomy 18:22)

And God prescribes an extremely severe punishment for presumptuous prophets.^{iv} You *do not* want to be a presumptuous prophet.

I don’t think we’re still commanded to kill false prophets...but we sure would save a lot of money on End Times books if we just read our Bibles... And maybe also, we’d stop taking the name of the Lord in vain.

[Image: slide shows the following questions on screen as Peter reads them.]

So anyway,

- Wouldn’t it be great to be a prophet?
- But isn’t it absurd that some claim to be prophets?

So . . . shouldn’t we despise prophecy?

1 Thessalonians 5:20 · “Do not despise prophecies...”

Now, I should mention that if it were not for some very detailed and extensive prophetic words, which I received starting in about 2006, I don’t think the Sanctuary would be here, ...and I might very well have committed suicide.

I should also mention that I think my wife is a “prophet.” She gets perturbed with me when I say that, for folks want her to tell them stuff, and she says to me, “*Peter, I don’t know stuff unless God tells me stuff.*”

--And that’s really true... but when it happens, it’s just utterly amazing to me, because you see, I know her. ...I know her.

And she’s been known to deceive me a bit--about credit card bills, crap she buys from the Pottery Barn, and the details of our shared diet plan. But then she’ll say, “Peter, I just heard such and such,” and I know she didn’t make it up, because half the time she has no clue what it means, and yet it’s utterly profound.

She’s quoted Bible verses to me that I’m almost positive she’s never read.

It's like she's cheating...seriously!

Well, anyway....1 Thessalonians 5:20-21a · “Do not despise prophecies, but test everything...”

Another word for that might be “science”—test everything. When people say that the Bible is opposed to Science, it reveals that they don't understand science, and they certainly haven't studied the Bible.

“Don't believe every spirit,” writes John, “test... because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”^v

If they say something will happen and it did not happen...

- They were lying and they knew it; they were conning you...
- Or, they were lying and didn't know it; they were mistaken...
- Or, they were lying and kind of knew it and kind of didn't know it.

Maybe they thought faith was all about psyching themselves up and just saying whatever popped into their head. Maybe they did hear something, but it didn't come from God.

Once Susan heard something very specific. And I remember, I said, “*Wow, ...but that doesn't sound like something Jesus would say.*”

We prayed and, rather miraculously, discovered it wasn't Jesus but that it had been a demon that had been speaking; it kept saying, “*Be afraid, be very afraid.*”

Sometimes people will get a prophetic word and do a bad job of communicating that word. And so, it's important to say, “*Tell me exactly what you heard.*” Often, I'll discover it's actually an amazing word that they heard, but they didn't know what it meant, and so provided their own meaning.

Sometimes people will get a prophetic word, and you should believe the word, but you should definitely not trust or follow the person that heard the word.

- One of the greatest prophetic words ever spoken was that “One man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish.” (John 11:50^{vi}) It was spoken by Caiaphas...who then had Jesus crucified.
- In Numbers 22, Balaam's Ass prophesies to Balaam, the greedy prophet.
- In 2 Peter, Peter points out that God can still use asses, but that doesn't mean that you should follow them... or be one.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 · **Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.**

So, you see, it is important to know good from evil. But how should we get that knowledge? Do we just take it from a tree? Take it, consume it, and use it as we desire?

[Image on screen shows the following questions, same as before but with addition]

Well anyway...

- Wouldn't it be great to be a prophet?
- But isn't it absurd that some claim to be prophets?

- So, shouldn't we despise prophecy?

No, in fact... you should: "Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy." (1 Cor. 14:1) Those are the words of Saint Paul.

"Ok!" We say, "So, how do we prophecy?"

[Image: slide shows the following on screen]

"HOW TO PROPHECY:"

Now I need to say, I'm a little nervous about this because folks write long and detailed books about this, and there are entire schools devoted to this stuff, and people pay lots of money for information on this topic. But I'm just going to tell you in three steps, that's really one step—ready?

[Image: the following numbered list appears on screen]

#1. Tell people what God tells you to tell people. (Tell the Truth.)

Now you may think that I'm being snarky—maybe I am... and maybe I'm not. But this seems to be a major sticking point for us in 2021.

It's important to note that Balaam's Ass never took a class on prophecy. And as far as I can tell, neither Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Moses, or any of the other prophets took a class on "How to Prophecy."

Classes are fine, and this is a little like a class right now. But... these prophets don't take a class on how to speak the Word of God. The Word of God just takes them and tells them what to speak. And, surprisingly, how to speak it.

They don't take knowledge of Good and evil, consume it, and use it for their own purposes... And yet Wisdom seems to take them and use them for His own purposes. They don't take the Truth, like it's fruit on a tree. If anything, the Truth takes them, and they cannot help but worship. By that, I mean *they're honest*—they don't control the Truth, but they let the Truth control them. That's called "honesty."

If you say, "I don't know what God is telling me to tell them," then tell them, "I don't know what God is telling me to tell you."

If you say, "Well... I do have an idea of what God might be telling me to tell them," then tell them, "I have an idea what God might be telling me to tell you."

And if God appears to you on a throne in a vision and tells you *exactly* what to tell them, say, "God appeared to me on a throne in a vision, and this is exactly what he told me to tell you."

Well, Paul wrote, "Desire that you may prophesy..." That means, *desire to know the truth and to speak truthfully*. But how do we know the Truth? How do we know the Word of God?

#2. Let the Word of God know you. (The Word of Love)

Now hold that thought, for I'd like to take a look at some of the Prophets, particularly the big three... and show you what I mean. You might ask yourself: *"Do I see any differences between these biblical prophets and the ones on TV?"*

I mentioned the call and commissioning of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—each time it's truly awesome: God calls them, gives them the truth to tell, ...but then it just gets utterly bizarre.

Here's an example in Isaiah: Isaiah sees the Lord clothed in Glory, is purified by fire, speaks the Word...Then this: Isaiah 20:2-6

² at that time the Lord spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and loose the sackcloth from your waist and take off your sandals from your feet," and he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

³ Then the Lord said, "As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Cush [Ethiopia] ⁴ so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, the nakedness of Egypt. ⁵ Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and of Egypt their boast. ⁶ And the inhabitants of this coastland (Israel) will say in that day, 'Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?' "

You see, it's not enough that Isaiah *knows* about what will happen to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, in whom Israel had trusted, and what will also happen to the Israelites of the Northern kingdom. It's not enough to know and to say that they will be exiled butt-naked. No! Isaiah has to prophesy *butt-naked . . . for three years!*

So, Isaiah sees the Word of God clothed in Glory...Then, Isaiah must like become the Word of God, butt-naked . . . for three years. And Isaiah didn't do anything to deserve this—He's from the tribe of Judah.

And things don't get easier for Jeremiah.^{vii} God tells Jeremiah that he was chosen before birth to be set over nations and kingdoms, and yet Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. God calls him to prophecy the destruction of Jerusalem, which is also the destruction of Jeremiah.

In chapter 15, he cries: **"¹⁰Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me....**

**¹⁶Your words were found, and I ate them,
and your words became to me a joy...**

**¹⁷...I sat alone, because your hand was upon me,
for you had filled me with indignation.**

**¹⁸Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?**

The Lord answers:

**19“If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,
you shall be as my mouth.
They shall turn to you,
but you shall not turn to them.**

Well, they don't appear to have turned to Jeremiah until after he was dead, having been tortured, ^{viii} thrown in a cistern, left to die, and later exiled to Egypt...where he died.

Last time, we saw how the king responded to Jeremiah and his secretary Baruch—he burns the scroll and tries to imprison Jeremiah.^{ix} Jeremiah feels all of this deeply. “Is there no balm in Gilead?” he cries in chapter 8.

In Jeremiah 27, Jeremiah is commanded by God to “bear a yoke,” like a slave—it looks like the beam of a cross... it's not what we would call “easy.”^x He's to strap himself to that yoke and prophesy, renouncing the false prophets who say that no one else will have to bear that yoke and suffer like Jeremiah.

Wouldn't it be great to be a prophet?

And check out Ezekiel:

Ezekiel is among the captives now exiled from Judah to Babylon, when he has that outrageous vision of one like a “Son of Man” seated on the throne of heaven. The Son of Man calls Ezekiel “Son of Man,” feeds Ezekiel a scroll, tells him to speak, and informs him that the house of Israel (which is Judah at this point) and that they will not listen. And then he tells Ezekiel that he will not even be able to speak until he makes a model of Jerusalem under siege, and does the following:

Ezekiel chapter 4:

4“Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment [‘avon: “iniquity”^{xii}]. 5 For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment [iniquity] of the house of Israel. 6 And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment [iniquity] of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year. 7 And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy against the city. 8 And behold, I will place cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege.

430 days!

The Lord then tells Ezekiel that he gets a pint of water every day and a small allotment of grain and beans, which he is to cook over a fire of human dung...

Then—I love this part—Ezekiel complains, “That’s just going too far!”

And the Lord of hosts says, *“OK, you can use cow dung.”^{xiii}*

Well, Ezekiel not only prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem, he has to *feel* the destruction of Jerusalem as he looks at an image of Jerusalem from the standpoint of Israel and Judah, *and* from the standpoint of God.

Jerusalem is the Lord's Bride, and the Temple is her Holy Place.

In Chapter 24, the Lord informs Ezekiel that Ezekiel's own beloved bride, the "*delight of his eyes*," will die... and then, immediately after, Ezekiel is to prophecy that the temple, in the heart of Jerusalem, will be profaned.

You see the Prophets, don't just *speak* a word; they *experience* the word that they speak—it seems to live in them... or die, and live within them. They feel the pain of evil and long for the Good, who is the Life. They don't just *know* the Word; they're *known by* the Word.

And it's not just Old Testament prophets. St. Paul writes about prophecy, most extensively to the Corinthians, who of all the folks in Scripture, remind me most of us Evangelical American Christians.

They're infants; they're all about spiritual gifts and uninterested in Love.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes: "Corinthians; our heart is wide open. ¹² You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³ In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also."^{xiv}

The Corinthians knew truths; but they would not surrender their hearts to the Truth.
They knew about the Word; but they would not be known by the Word.
They knew about procedures and laws; but would not surrender to Love.
They would not allow the Word of Love—to know them; to *affect* them...

[Video clip: short clip from *The Big Bang Theory* tv show where Sheldon is trying to figure out a way to extend his inevitable year of death by turning himself into a "mobile virtual presence device" of a computer screen of his face, moving around on robotic wheels to interact with his friends.]

I find that old clip to be remarkably prophetic for 2021. I'm not saying we shouldn't practice social distancing, but we should be very aware of our tendency to turn ourselves into "mobile virtual presence devices." *Mobile virtual presence devices*: So afraid to die that we never actually live, and so rendering ourselves entirely unfit to prophesy the Resurrection and the Life—the Gospel

- Isn't it a bit odd, that we've spent billions of dollars on books prophesying a pre-tribulation rapture, so that we would not be affected by the tribulation and have to pick up a cross and follow?
- Isn't it ironic, that we're into all this prophecy about the old city of Jerusalem on the other side of the world, when Jesus died to make us his Bride, right here and right now—his Jerusalem?
- Isn't it a bit embarrassing that we get so worked up about presidents, when we're called to testify to the King who reigns in our hearts, feels our every sorrow, and longs to know us as the Bridegroom knows his Bride?

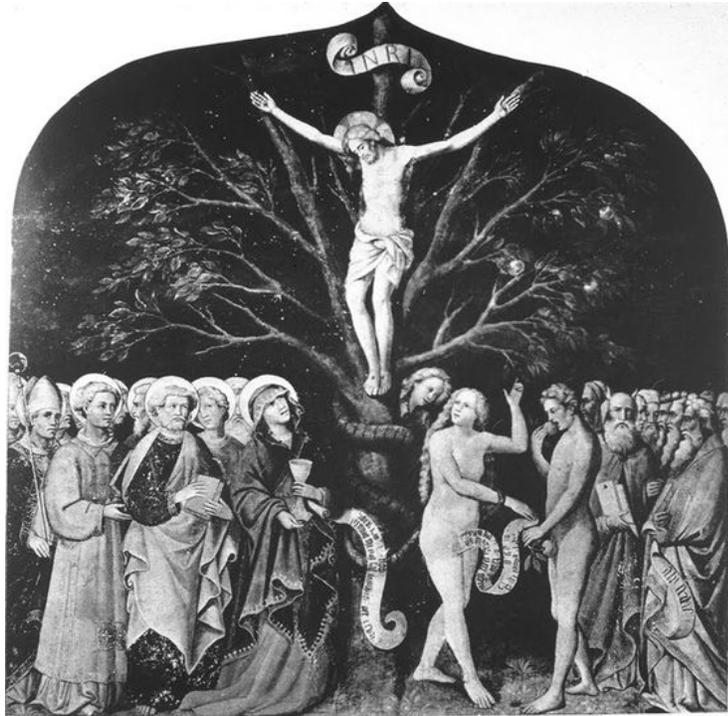


Figure 1 "Mystery of the Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena (1420)

See this man hanging on this tree in a Garden? Do you know him? *How* do you know him?

Is he information that you can take and use to keep your soul safe and unaffected by the pain of this world? Or do you know him because he's known you, and you've become his Sanctuary, his Bride, his Body... and even his Life, speaking his Word, which is the Truth?

"This is eternal life," prayed Jesus, "that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

"I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord," writes Paul, "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."^{xv}

Paul mourns the destruction of Jerusalem and his fellow Jews who torture him and chain him in stocks, but then he writes, "*I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off for the sake of my brothers, my kinsman according to the flesh.*"^{xvi}

Isn't it strange how we prophecy "hell" for other people and don't even shed a tear, while Paul felt *unceasing anguish and sorrow* for his kinsman according to the flesh, and offered *to be accursed* in their place? You know, Jesus prophesied hell, that is Hades and Gehenna, more than any other prophet in Scripture, and then he descended into hell, for, as Isaiah writes, "*he "numbered [himself] with the transgressors.*"^{xvii} That's us.

Well, the prophets prophesied temporal pain but also a universe of eternal joy.

It was old butt-naked Isaiah who prophesied, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord... for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.”^{xviii} Imagine how that felt for Isaiah!

He also prophesied that after the destruction of all our “good deeds,” human flesh, and even earth and heaven—he said they’d “wear out like an old garment” or be burned in the valley of Gehenna—after that, we will all be adorned in garments of praise and worship as one.^{xix}

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, prophesies that Gehenna will one day be inside the new Jerusalem,^{xx} God’s law will be placed within our hearts, and *we will all know him*.^{xxi} And in that day, God will give us “*gladness for our sorrow*” and our “*mourning will actually be turned into joy*.”^{xxii} That means our joy is actually constructed with our sorrow.

So, if you never mourn, you’ll never know or be known by joy. But just imagine how much joy will be known by Jeremiah!

If you’re comfortably numb—, if you’ve become a virtual mobile presence device—, if you have a heart of stone...you can’t know Joy.

“I will remove the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh,”^{xxiii} says the Lord through Ezekiel.

Ezekiel, who was commanded to feel the utter destruction of Israel, is then also commanded to prophesy to the bones of Israel, which would include the bones of *his delight*—his bride... and the Lord’s Bride: Jerusalem.

- “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel” says the Lord...
- “Therefore prophesy, and say to them, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and you will rise from your graves, O my people.”
- “And I will place my Spirit within you,” says the Lord through Ezekiel.
- “And I will put you in your land,” says the Lord through Ezekiel.^{xxiv}
- “And they will say this land... has become like the Garden of Eden,” says the Lord through Ezekiel.^{xxv}

Imagine how that felt for Ezekiel!

It’s like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel experience the very passion of our Lord Jesus the Christ, and then the very unmitigated, ecstatic, resurrected glory that belongs only to him. It’s like the Prophets die with him and rise with him...

You can’t rise with him if you’re unwilling to die with him... the Word of God.

They don’t simply know *about* the Word of God—They’re known *by* the Word of God... and give birth to the Word of God. They love because they’ve been loved by the Truth.

So, Paul tells the Corinthians to pursue love and desire to prophecy. Then later, he tells them that they’re restricted by their own affections. And to them, he writes, “If we are afflicted... it is for your salvation... for we know that as you share in our suffering, (*pathema*—passion) you will also share in our comfort (*paraklesis*).” Jesus is our *parakletos*, our Comforter, our Helper.^{xxvi}

I think Paul's saying, "You Americans and Corinthians are restricted in your affections, but now you are afflicted that you might be affected by evil, and *yearn* for the Good who will fill you with his Life, and cause you to manifest his Word—to prophecy."

So, have you been afflicted?

Have you felt naked and exposed like Isaiah?

Have you wept like Jeremiah at the destruction of your nation?

Have you lost a loved one like Ezekiel... or Jesus?

See? It may be that you have been afflicted so that you might be affected, hate the evil, call on the Good, surrender to his Word, and give birth to his Word—that is prophecy a new creation.

So back to class:

[Image: slide shows the following steps]

How to Prophecy:

#1. Tell people what God tells you to tell people; be honest!

#2. Let the Word of God know you, so that you might know the Word and speak the Word.

In other words: *Love as you have been loved.*

Prophecy is speaking the Truth in Love.

And now, I should mention that there are many forms of prophecy. Only once in my life have I heard words the way my wife hears words. And yet, I think I have prophesied; I think it's happened in sermons, and I'm convinced it's happened in prayer. But, it wasn't when I was worried about whether or not I could hear the voice of God, or whether or not I could prophesy. It happened when I felt what another person was feeling, and I think I felt in that moment what Jesus was feeling—I was affected by Love—and so I hated the lie, longed for the truth, and so opened my mouth and spoke a word that I hoped would help.

I spoke the Gospel—not as a law, but as love burning in my flesh... and I discovered: It actually wasn't me that was speaking.

You know that God is Love, and Jesus is his Word: the Truth.

[Image on screen continues the numbered list]

#3. Bear the Testimony of Jesus.

Revelation 19:10 · "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy."

Now, that phrase "testimony of Jesus" can mean a testimony that you give about your experience of Jesus. And "testimony of Jesus" can also mean the testimony that Jesus gives through his Spirit, the Comforter, the Helper, the *Parakletos* within you (the testimony he gives).

Now do you really think that Jesus is concerned that you would know the identity of the next president in advance? Or is it all about something else?

Some of you may remember our friend Ron Heagy, who spoke to our church a few times several years ago—Ron is a paraplegic who's spoken to hundreds of thousand of youth around the world about the Love of God. He broke his neck in high school, diving into a wave in Southern California. Three months later, the doctors told him that he'd never walk again.

When his parents left his hospital room that night, he was left alone...utterly alone, except for an eight-year-old boy in a coma who hadn't spoken a word since he'd been hit by a car riding his bike. His name was Jimmy. Ron, the former football star, resented being stuck in a room with eight-year-old Jimmy the vegetable...

Well, after Ron's mother kissed him goodnight, told him that God had a plan, and his parents left the room, the damn just broke. Ron began to weep uncontrollably. Sobbing, he cried out to God, alone in the darkness: *"Please let me die! I can't take care of myself, can't dig a ditch, or play football. I can't hug my girl or hold her hand. What kind of man is that? I'll only be a burden... Please... please just let me die...!"*

Then in the darkness of his room, a small, faltering voice whispered: *"R-o-nnn...?"*

He tried to control his sobbing so he could hear...

It was Jimmy... and the only words that Ron ever heard him speak. *"Ron... I love you."* It was Jimmy, but not just Jimmy.^{xxvii} That's prophesy.

It was the Word of God, saving Ron, and perhaps, thousands who've heard Ron speak.

I told you that there was a particular time in my life when I felt utterly rejected, abandoned, and misunderstood, and if it weren't for a host of prophetic words, I think I might have killed myself. When I was a success (as the world measures success), some people had a string of visions: the destruction of the church, and even of Jerusalem. I hated the visions at the time, but when my entire world fell apart, I knew that God was in charge, and I had to keep preaching.

A few weeks before I was excommunicated for simply hoping that God *might* save all, a man told me that God told him that I was to read Jeremiah 15:15-21. I ingested the words like broken bread and red wine. They were like a balm to my soul.

Several years ago, a friend said, *"Peter, God wants you to read Isaiah 20:1-6."* At the time, I felt utterly naked, stripped of my pride, and embarrassed to preach, and then I realized, *"Well, this means I'm supposed to preach."*

A couple of years ago, I was ready to quit, and I cried out to God saying, *"You have to speak to me!"* I sat down on the toilet, picked up an old Bible, and it fell open to these words—*"Stand on your feet, oh man, and I will speak to you... you shall speak my word to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear..."* (Ezekiel 2:1-7)

I have too many prophetic stories to tell; the most amazing have been words that have come through my wife. But none of the words have revealed any dates concerning some sort of "rapture," the politics of the Middle East, or who will be the next president.

And yet, they all reveal what I most desperately need to hear: *"Peter, I know you; Peter, I love you; Peter, tell them who I am."*

I suspect that the greatest prophetic word in all of Scripture was spoken by a man who looked remarkably different than the prophets on TV. He spoke this word entirely naked like Isaiah. He spoke it naked, and nailed to a tree, in a garden. He had carried the cross beam up the hill, just like the yoke strapped to the back of Jeremiah. And like Jeremiah, he spoke the Word when all refused to listen and only returned his compassion with only curses. He was accursed for his brethren, his “kinsman according to the flesh.”

He spoke the Word, strapped naked to his yoke, and gazing at his Bride. He bore her iniquity, just like Ezekiel bore the iniquity of Jerusalem. She was his delight, and yet in tears, he had prophesied her death.

He lifted his head and said, “Father forgive.” Then as the earth shook and the light failed, he prophesied—one word, *tetelesthai*—“It is finished.” And then he delivered up his spirit, the spirit of prophecy.

He not only spoke the Word; He is the Word. He is the End.

Shall we test that Word?

[Image on screen of previous artwork: “Fall and Redemption”]

Maybe we do test that Word all the time—whenever we sin. Maybe that’s what we’re doing in time... But I know we will celebrate his victory for all eternity.^{xxviii}

Well, he cried, “It is finished!” *What is finished?*

I suspect we will all die with him and rise with him, and realize that we’re finished, death is no more, and all things are new. That’s the power of the Word of God.

Communion

And so that night, which was the beginning of that day, he took bread and he broke it, saying, “This is my body. Take and eat. Do this in remembrance of me.” And in the same way after supper, and after giving thanks, he took the cup saying, “This is the eternal covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you, and do it in remembrance of me.”

Did you know that *you* are the fulfillment of God’s prophetic Word: Man, woman, humanity, in the image and likeness of God. Ingest this Word, and speak this Word, and that’s called prophecy.

“In the last days... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,” declares the Lord, “and your sons and daughters will prophesy.”^{xxix}

Maybe that day is this day. Amen.

Benediction

Infuse every Word that we speak...and not only, Lord, that we would speak the Word, but that we would be the incarnation of the Word—your Body, Lord Jesus, in this suffering world. Oh God, thank you that you have and you will clothe us with your righteousness. Thank you, Lord God, that our sorrow will actually be transformed into joy. Thank you, Lord God, that we will be your Jerusalem, for in fact, we actually are your Jerusalem—a Jerusalem that’s coming down now, even as we speak. So, Lord God, you are good. And we worship you, in Jesus’s name. Amen.

Worship God and you will prophesy.

1. Be honest.
2. Let the Lord love you so that you will love other people.
3. You are the testimony of Jesus.

So everything I’m really saying is, believe the Gospel and you will become the Gospel. Amen.

Endnotes

ⁱ This is a fascinating topic. For my take on the Olivet Discourse see: <https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-kingdom-come/>. It would also be helpful to explore our recent series on the Revelation: <https://relentless-love.org/sermons/?filter-by=series&filter-term=revelation-2017>.

ⁱⁱ Matthew 24:3

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 24:36

^{iv} Deuteronomy 18:20

^v 1 John 4:1

^{vi} But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. -John 11:49-53

^{vii} By the time of Jeremiah, the Northern Kingdom had fallen, and the Southern Kingdom was about to fall.

^{viii} Jeremiah 38:1-13

^{ix} Jeremiah is commanded to act out all of this pain.

He breaks a clay pot in the valley of Gehenna (the Potter’s field) and prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem. And like Isaiah, he too has to prophecy naked leaving his loin cloth in a cliff.

^x Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” –Matthew 11:28-30

It’s such an incredible irony: but dying to yourself with Christ... does make everything “easy.”

xii 5771 עֲוֹן [‘avon, ‘avown /aw-vone/] n m. From 5753; TWOT 1577a; GK 6411; 230 occurrences; AV translates as “iniquity” 220 times, “punishment” five times, “fault” twice, “Iniquities + 1697” once, “mischief” once, and “sin” once. 1 perversity, depravity, iniquity, guilt or punishment of iniquity. 1A iniquity. 1B guilt of iniquity, guilt (as great), guilt (of condition). 1C consequence of or punishment for iniquity. –Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon

Just this one Hebrew word merits a hundred sermons—it means that iniquity is its own punishment!

xiii And check this out: Ezekiel isn’t even near Jerusalem, he’s in Babylon.

xiv 2nd Corinthians 6:11-13

xv Philippians. 3:8-10

xvi Romans 9:2-3

xvii Isaiah 53:12

xviii Isaiah 61:10

xix Isaiah 51:6-8, 61:1-3, 64:6, 66:22-24

xx Jeremiah 31:38-40

xxi Jeremiah 31:31-34

xxii Jeremiah 31:13

xxiii Ezekiel 36:26

xxiv Ezekiel 37:11-14

xxv Ezekiel 36:35

xxvi And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. – John 14:16-17 KJV

xxvii Ron Heagy with Donita Dyer, *Life is an Attitude [A Tragedy Turns to Triumph]* (Multnomah Publishers, Sisters OR: 1997), pp.79-87

xxviii This is a huge idea that I try to address in a sermon from 6-14-20, titled “Lead us not into temptation”:
<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/lead-us-not-into-temptation/>

xxix Acts 2:17, Joel 2:28