

Part I Judging Prophecy The Commandments of The Lord

By Rich Harris

"If there arises among you a prophet or dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'- which you have not known- 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to that prophet or dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 13:1-3 NKJV).

The Old Covenant prophets point us to the heart of a covenant keeping God and a coming Messianic Age. All prophetic words led to the heart of God's altar, restored for worship, holiness, sacrifice and purity. These prophets also spoke of a New Covenant where God would write His Law upon the hearts of all who believe and put His Spirit within them.

The people of the old covenant judged prophecies as either true or false. The teaching of Moses the prophet known to the Jews as the Torah clearly defines the heart of God in discerning true and false prophets and prophecies in their time. Prophecies from that era were often corrective but always carried God's love toward a sometimes rebellious and disobedient people.

The Lord's word is truth emerging from the intensity of His love, and in that intensity, He disciplines those whom He loves! The words of the old covenant prophets always pointed Israel to the Father's heartbeat. False prophetic voices of that covenant blatantly pointed men toward other gods, turning them away from the statutes, ordinances, and commands of God. Within those statutes, ordinances and commands are the essence of His purpose and life for a covenant keeping people. The standards of Moses' prophetic teaching remain both foundational and applicable in judging prophecy in the church today!

God sent Moses the prophet as the embodied message in word and character that led the Lord's people in the ways of life and worship to Himself. This message was known to the Hebrew believers as the *Torah*, or *the teaching of Moses*. One definition of *Torah* is, *the body of prophetic teaching* (see Strongs/BDB 8451). From this definition we find one role of a prophet is to give vision to the people

of God from His heart for the kingdom and how to abide in it with Him. All of God's loving commands were written in the *Torah* of Moses, including judging prophecy.

This *prophetic teaching* spoke of a death penalty to the prophet who spoke false words, signs and wonders. While true prophecy carried the power of life to the kingdom; false prophecy released the power of death to the kingdom. A biblical proverb says; "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*" (Proverbs 18:21). Jesus the Messiah stated in the new covenant writings that, "*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*" (Matt 12:34). There is no doubt then that false prophetic words release the power of death and true prophetic words carried the power of God's life. True prophetic speaking releases the power to live our lives according to the Lord's ways written in His statutes, ordinances and commands. God doesn't ask for obedience - He commands!

A new covenant counter phrase, states that those who prophesy today, "*speak to men for edification, exhortation and comfort*" (1 Cor. 14:3). We are not talking about those (few) who walk in the office of a prophet, but also those who are *gifted* to prophesy. In these three disciplines of speaking we find *the power of the tongue* in prophecy today. Yet, there remains a dilemma in the church of how to properly judge prophecy. Because of our lack of knowledge of what prophecy is and God's intention for its kingdom use, we often lean toward an old covenant thought process of judging prophecy today.

In the old covenant God's prophets were often persecuted when they did not speak according to the people's expectations and personal agendas. We often see a similar scenario today due to our lack of knowledge cognizant of a prophetic God seeking to speak through a prophetically gifted church. We must remember that the principles of judging prophecy began in the *Torah* of Moses. The *Torah* defines some the tests and penalty for judging true or false prophecies in that covenant. However there are some that apply to the new covenant also. Interestingly, Jesus made a profound statement to the Hebrew people in the new covenant writings. He said, "*For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words*" (John 5:46, 47 emphasis added). There is an emphasis here that the writings of Moses hold the same authority as the words of Jesus. Based on His statement and our covenant with Him, judging prophecy has its roots in the *Torah* of Moses.

Prophecy Reveals God's Full Nature

The words of true old covenant prophets were predictive of a coming Messiah whose name and character would reveal God's nature to mankind. That nature is to redeem His creation with salvation, healing, and deliverance! A deliverance that returns the hearts of His people back to His covenant ways, thus saving us from the darkness of this world!

New covenant prophets have their words defined in Messiah's prophetic heart and speak to, His body the church, and the church in turn must become God's voice to the world. In this covenant, prophecy reveals the full nature of Jesus in the prophetic ministry gifts, *things of the Spirit*, and the fruits of the Spirit. The apostle John writes that everything the Father is and has belongs to Jesus and is manifested in Him, who is expressed through His body the church (see John 16:13-15). We must give attention to what is written in conjunction with the spoken prophetic word, "*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*" (Rev. 19:10b NKJV). True prophecy reveals God's true nature!

False prophecy paints a deceptive picture of both the nature and truth of God. The nature of false prophecy began with the deception in Eden. The prophet Isaiah stresses how Satan violated God's authority and in that violation would come his ultimate downfall. (see Isaiah 14:12-15) The prophet Ezekiel speaks of this rebellious one trespassing against God's holiness. (Ezekiel 28:13-17) Through these two illustrations we find the root of false prophecy lies in cunning deception against God's authority and holiness. The words of false prophets will lead God's people astray causing them to wander off course, away from the truth, that is in Messiah Jesus. Further these roots of false prophecy will subtly lead us away from God's authority and holiness toward a lawless church that waives the commands of God and embraces the comforts of the world! Jesus is the ultimate manifestation of God's authority and holiness! The synonym of *false prophecy* is *cunning deception* leading us away from the truth, into error. It is deception that is born in the pride of created beauty and a heart that wants to exalt mankind's worldly nature above the true nature of God!

The new covenant makes no mention of a death penalty for false prophets. This has great significance because *the death penalty* thought process has misled today's church in judging prophecy. Currently our lack of knowing how to properly judge prophecy has brought a death penalty to immature and unequipped prophetic people. In some streams within the church this mind set has literally shut down the prophetic flow of God's intent to speak to us. I am speaking of a death penalty that

wants to separate them from the life and head of the body. This is a major area of the deception of satan in the new covenant church.

With regard to the current prophetic equipping trend there remain thousands of gifted ones who have not yet been fully equipped. In part of the church there remains a barrier, or wall of partition that wants to separate this gift that God is restoring to strengthen, encourage, and comfort us. It appears that there are not enough prophetic ministers who have obeyed the call to equip God's people. Many prophetic ministers seem to be conference oriented rather than equipping the local body where they are needed the most. Some have termed them 'blessing prophets' rather than 'equipping prophets'. A prophetic conference unless it is designated as a specific equipping event over several days will only bring at best an impartation of general understanding of one's prophetic gift. At times, some who attend these events return home believing that they are now prophets!

In order to change this part of our dilemma we must develop equipping through specific schools of prophecy that are directly connected to local bodies who embrace prophecy. Within these types of schools there is ongoing opportunity for biblically based study, long term equipping, and practical applications, that teach us how to relate to leaders and members of the body. We must give more pursuit toward this type of training as the day of darkness draws nearer in our time. Until then, our words or thoughts of judgment against immature and unequipped prophetic people have the power to shut down and kill the gifting in them.

Often our judgments point to the *prophetic person* more than the content of the prophecy. Although the prophetic person's character is a part of judging the word, it is not the whole. Our tendency to focus on the person happens because of their presentation, obvious show of immaturity, or rebellion, all coming from poor (or no) discipling, equipping, and mentoring. This is rooted in our lack of knowledge in understanding the principles of prophetic speaking in the new covenant. We need thorough equipping in judging prophecy as well as speaking prophetically. Most judging of prophecy today comes out of our own lack of knowledge of the above and opens the door for a critical spirit to be the soul judge. Critical spirits have their life in the spirit of fear! Unfortunately, many local body meetings where prophecies are spoken *have no reference* to judging prophecy. This is a major pitfall in the prophetic movement today.

If we do not understand the aspects and principles of prophetic speaking then we disqualify ourselves to properly judge prophecy. Because much of the church is still immature in understanding and activating prophecy, fears remain that hinder this important gift. When fear lends to our experience we lose all

perspective of judging a word with godly wisdom! The only way this will change is through proper equipping, mentoring, and nurturing those gifted. In that aspect it will require relationships, first among the leadership, that flows into the people who make up the body. If leaders have a significant relationship with the Godhead they will pursue a similar relationship with the body.

The Lord makes this clear through the apostle John, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And ***this is the commandment*** we have ***from Him***: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:20, 21 NKJV, emphasis added). This is not a new commandment but an old one that has its root in the teaching of Moses the prophet. This is why John states that, "and ***this is*** the commandment we have from Him." The emphasis of hating (or detesting) our brother may be provoked by the prophetic gift born in the new covenant prophet! *Further - we are admonished by the apostle Paul - to pursue love first, desire spiritual gifts, but **more that we may prophesy!*** In the pursuit of God's love comes the true desire for the purity of spiritual gifts and especially prophecy! True prophetic individuals will embody this gifting with love poured into us by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the body! Love in the prophetic gift and speaker brings the impact to change lives for the kingdom of God.

Current problems that effect love in the body are, our lacking in intimate relationship with God, our lack of love for one another, our inability to discern the body and its members by the Spirit and the word. Without God's love in the gifts and speaker we are just making noise of no value! Generally, we tend to be very *word* oriented or very *spirit* oriented. Thus, we become lopsided in our perspectives of spiritual things such as prophecy, healing, miracles, etc. We must remember that *we are now partakers with God in a better covenant with better promises.* One area of promise is that God continues to pour out His Spirit on all believers. He has provided a way through the Spirit for each individual member of His body (the Church) to both hear the voice of God and understand the written word.

He has also provided in this covenant apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip us in those particular disciplines of ministry. If we are covenant keepers with Him then we willingly partake of the covenant provision! Those ministry offices are derivatives of a direct aspect of the character, gifting and likeness of Jesus, the Son of man. More specifically, he gave us prophets to equip us to hear the Father (just as He heard the Father prophetically) more clearly for ourselves, individually and corporately. Prophets have a responsibility to equip the body in both the principles and art of speaking and judging prophecy.

Beyond that part of the prophetic vocation they also equip and nurture those individuals called to the prophetic gift, ministry, or office. Prophets also impart vision to the church, help bring direction with renewed purpose to leaders with whom they have relationship. They also speak of things to come, deal with past, present and future issues in the church, all in governmental kingdom authority. At times they will have God's word for nations, cities and local church bodies. Prophets will also bear witness to Jesus as both the light and Life of men.

We must remember that the foundational authority of prophetic ministry is rooted in the *Torah* and *the Prophets*. That is, that God spoke to His prophets, who spoke to kings, who related the issues spoken, to the kingdom people. The Lord is restoring that governmental principle to His church today. The apostle Paul ask the question, "*are all apostles, are all prophets?*", to which we know that, not *all are* of those ministry offices. But those who *are* of those afore mentioned offices have the distinct commissioning to equip the church in one of those specific disciplines. God gave us the written word as a watermark of measured balance to *the things of the Spirit*. And He gave us *the things of the Spirit* to confirm His heart in the written word. In all of this the Lord is **revealing the full nature** of His Son in and to the body. Jesus said, "If you have seen Me you have seen the Father." Today's prophetic ministry has the responsibility to bring the prophetic mandate of God in the same manner.

The Prophetic Community

Moses the prophet cried out in hope that God would put His Spirit upon all His people so that they would prophesy (see Numbers 11:29). Being the prophet and teacher of the *Torah*, he was speaking the heart of God. Understanding the aspects and consequences of prophetic speaking he was able to lay the foundation, both for speaking prophetically and judging the prophecy spoken. In Numbers 11, the Lord illustrates prophetic speaking both in the tent of meeting and in the camp apart from the tent of meeting. The tent of meeting represents the elders or leaders in the church. At the tent of meeting the leaders and elders would first go and inquire of the Lord as part of a council. Once they received that word or counsel the people would come to the tent of meeting and receive from them. This seems somewhat lacking in our prophetic processing today.

The camp represents the general body of believers. Within that body remained two elders, named Eldad and Medad who prophesied in the camp. During that event, a young man came to Moses telling him of these two who prophesied in

the camp. If we take the meaning of their names, the young man would have said, "God has loved (Eldad) and love (Medad) are prophesying in the camp". The foundation of speaking the prophetic truth in love was laid in the *Torah* of Moses and spoken both in the tent of meeting (elders and leaders) and the camp (local body).

Several new covenant principles are found in these foundational aspects of prophecy spoken by Moses. In First Corinthians 13:1, Paul writes of speaking the tongues of men and angels, without the substance of God's love, are likened unto making loud useless noises. As a continuation of that thought he later says (1 Cor. 14:1) that we are to *pursue love first, desire spiritual gifts, but especially that we may prophesy*. In the same chapter he gives us an *order of prophetic speaking* (in God's love) and a *commandment* that others (prophetic speakers) *judge the prophecy* (in God's love). Finally, in verse 37 of chapter 14, he admonishes those who think themselves to be prophetic or spiritual that what he is writing to us are *the commandments of the Lord*. It is clear then that pursuing God's love and desiring to prophesy are foundational in both the old and new covenant writings. All of the above being true, it is without doubt that we are to judge all prophecies according to biblical foundations in the love of God.