

**Articles and Sermons :: New Covenant Prophesying by Zac Poonen****New Covenant Prophesying by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2020/3/13 14:39**

All believers are not called to be prophets. But all believers are commanded to eagerly desire to prophesy (1 Cor.14:1). This is one of the results of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the new-covenant age (Acts 2:17, 18). To prophesy (in its meaning in the new covenant) is to speak to people to encourage them, challenge them and build them up (1 Cor.14:3). All Spirit-filled believers can prophesy in the church meetings briefly (1 Cor.14:31). The other believers must judge what was spoken, and discern how much of it was from God and how much of it was human – testing everything with Scripture (1 Cor.14:29).

God has also appointed some as prophets in the church. These are men whom God has given as gifts to the church to build up the Body of Christ. Prophets will speak long messages to challenge and strengthen believers. We read that – Judas and Silas, being prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message – (Acts 15:32). But very few believers are called to be prophets in the church (1 Cor.12:28; Eph.4:11) – and everyone must remember that.

Listening to someone who prophesies in a church-meeting is like eating a plantain. We must throw away the skin (what is human) and eat only what is inside the skin (that which is from God). In a young believer the skin will be very thick and there will be very little within it that is from God. But we are happy to take even that little. In a more mature believer however, the skin will be thinner and there will be much that is from God. Sisters too can prophesy (Acts 2:17, 18). But we do not see any female prophetesses, after the new covenant was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost. There are no female apostles either.

Anyone who prophesies should do so only according to the proportion of his faith (Rom.12:6). That was why, Paul feared to use the words "Thus says the Lord" when prophesying. He would rather say, "I think I also have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor.7:40). We must never use the words "Thus says the Lord", when we prophesy, unless we are quoting some verse from Scripture. Jeremiah warns us against using such words (Jer.23:31). Also, whenever we prophesy, we must allow the other believers to discern and decide whether our message is from the Lord or not.

We must also bear in mind that no new-covenant prophet ever gave directions to others as to what they should do in a particular situation (as the old-covenant prophets did). In Acts 11:28, we see that Agabus predicted a famine that was about to come, but he never said a word as to what anyone should do about it. In the same way, in Acts 21:11, he told Paul that he would be taken captive if he went to Jerusalem, but he did not tell Paul whether to go or not. The reason for this is that every believer now has the Holy Spirit – and the Spirit is the One Who is to tell each believer what he is to do. Under the old covenant however, people did not have the indwelling Spirit to guide them. And so the prophet who had the Spirit had to tell them what the Lord wanted them to do.

But in spite of these warnings, there are many immature believers who act like old covenant prophets and tell believers even today what they should do. There were some arrogant, immature believers like that in Tyre who – prophesied – even to the apostle Paul, – from their own spirit – and told him – not to go to Jerusalem – (Acts 21:4). But Paul quite rightly ignored their directions and went (Acts 21:13). Later, the Lord confirmed to Paul that it was indeed His will that he should go to Jerusalem (Acts 23:11). So those believers at Tyre were totally wrong in their so-called – prophecy –. It did not come from the Lord. We must warn believers in our churches never to listen to any – directive prophecy – (so-called) that tells him what to do or what not to do – lest they be deceived.

The main purpose of new-covenant prophecy is (1) to save God's people from their sins and (2) to build the church. This is what we must proclaim in all the meetings of our churches – because Jesus came for these two purposes: (1) to save His people from all sin (the first promise in the New Testament - Matt.1:21); and (2) to build His church (Matt.16:18).

On the other hand, if you preach more about exercising the gifts of the Spirit than about freedom from sin and building relationships in the Body of Christ, then your church will soon become like the church in Corinth – exercising all the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor.1:7), but carnal and immature and full of infighting. And your church may even end up like the Laodicean church – wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, and not even knowing it (Rev.3:17). That would be a calamity.

If you want to build a new-covenant church, then the emphasis in your preaching must always be the same as it was in the teachings of Jesus and of the apostles and not what we hear in most Christian churches today.

Re: New Covenant Prophecy by Zac Poonen - posted by narrowpath, on: 2020/3/14 9:45

Zac wrote:

I do not quite agree with this assessment. Those who prophesied did prophesy through the Spirit, but then ADDED their own interpretation. They were not totally wrong, but right in respect to the event they prophesied but wrong in their interpretation. Putting them into the category of false prophets is a tad too strict. Therefore we have the body of Christ to evaluate prophecies and test everything.

They added their interpretation due to their lack of understanding of the purpose of suffering and hardships in the Christian life. Agabus was more mature and refrained from such additions.

We must allow for new believers to grow in the gifts of the Spirit and receive correction.

Agabus said the same thing and did not add his interpretation. He had learned a lesson from his earlier prophecy where he predicted a famine and left it to the disciples to act upon.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2020/3/15 8:33

Acts 21:4 -After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.

I checked in few other translations, all of them call just Spirit and not holy Spirit. In this article the word 'from their own spirit' is added to Acts 21:4. I believe the reason for this is, holy spirit cannot contradict what Jesus said later as His own Will (Acts 23:11). So the word Spirit there (Acts 21:4) cannot refer to Holy Spirit.

I don't believe this article calls them as false prophets, but prophets who spoke arrogantly and immaturely from their own spirit. They might have sensed that Paul is going to suffer in Jerusalem and immediately understood that he should not go there.

When Peter prevented Jesus from doing God's will, Jesus called him Satan. It is a serious thing to prevent someone from doing God's will.

I see a lot of application for this in our days, for example when you see a brother going through a health issue or a job loss, we immediately counsel them to come out of this. We do not realize that it might be God's will for that brother to suffer this way. Instead it is wise to encourage them to trust in God during this time. Immature believers will talk to us in a spirit telling that this situation should not have come to you. But mature believers will talk in a spirit that God who allowed this situation in your life, is still having all things under his control and trust in him.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2020/3/15 9:49

When you look up the word spirit or in Acts, it will always mean Holy Spirit unless it is explicitly mentioned to be an evil spirit. So does the original wording of Acts 21:4.

https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/act/21/4/t_concf_1039004

This was conform to earlier prophecies as per Acts 20:23. So the thing is established by 2 or 3 witnesses.

So there is no doubt, that those spoke through the Holy Spirit - the bible says so. It was not like with the maid with a spirit of divination which the original text marked as evil spirit.

Those who prophesied were called disciples and I believe they were genuine, but not called prophets. So I see they exercised a true gift and added their own interpretation.

I agree, we often hear brothers and sisters in an attempt to comfort us speak words from their own imagination. I did that in my early days, I was guilty, too.

They are not false, but immature or carnal, and they can prevent people from doing God's will or learning a necessary lesson.