

Prophecy in 1 Corinthians

I. Introduction

1. Did Prophecy cease with the formation of the canon of Scripture?

The continuationist position invites any Christian to interpret any personal impression or subjective feeling as a potential revelation from God. Moreover, it removes any authoritative, objective standard for questioning the legitimacy of someone's supposed revelation from God. Within the continuationist paradigm, it's normal for a person not to know for sure if an impression came from God or from some other source. But that is a direct by-product of corrupt charismatic theology that degrades and discounts discernment and diverts people from the truth.¹

In view is additional, immediate revelation that functions, especially where guidance is concerned, beyond Scripture and so unavoidably implies a certain insufficiency in Scripture that needs to be compensated for. The tendency of this view, no matter how carefully it is qualified, is to divert attention from Scripture, particularly in practical and pressing life issues.²

Summary of the Cessationist Position

‘Biblically speaking, no distinction is made in Scripture between the prophets in either Testament. In fact, the New Testament uses identical terminology to describe both Old and New Testament prophets’.³

Summary of the Conservative Continuist Position

2. Prophecy and Men and Women in Ministry

II. Prophecy in the Old Testament

A prophecy is present when a person

- (a) Through a cognitive experience (a vision, an auditory experience, an audio-visual experience, a dream or the like) becomes the subject of the revelation of a deity, or several deities and, in addition
- (b) Is conscious of being commissioned by the deity or deities in question to convey the revelation in a verbal form (as a ‘prophecy’ or a ‘prophetic speech’), or through nonverbal communicative acts (‘symbolic acts’), to a third party who constitutes the actual addressee of the message⁴

Exodus 7:1

Amos 3:7

¹ John MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville: Nelson, 2013), 241.

² Richard B. Gaffin, ‘A Cessationist View’, in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?: Four Views* (Leicester: IVP, 1996), 52.

³ McArthur, *Strange Fire*, 119.

⁴ Manfred Weippert, ‘Prophetie im Alten Orient’, *Neues Bibel-Lexicon* 3 (1997), 197 cited in and translated by Marti Nissinen, ‘What is Prophecy?’ in *Inspired Speech: Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honour of Herbert B. Huffmon* (London: T&T Clark), 20.

1. Prophetic Prediction
 - a. 1 Kings 13:2 [...] a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name
 - b. 1 Kings. 17:1 [...] there shall be neither dew nor rain these years
2. Prophetic Insight
 - a. 2 Kings 2:15 The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha
 - b. 2 Kings 6:12 Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber."
3. Prophetic Prayer/Praise
 - a. Prayer:
 - i. Genesis 20:7 [...] he is a prophet, and he will pray for you,
 - b. Praise
 - i. 1 Samuel 10:5 [...] you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying.
 - ii. Num 11:25-29 [...] when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied.
 - iii. 1 Samuel 10:6 Then the spirit of the LORD will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man. [...] 10 When they came to Gibeah, behold, a band of prophets met him; and the spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he prophesied among them.
 - iv. Cf. 1 Sam. 19:20; 23-4; 1 Kings 22:10
4. Prophetic Proclamation
 - a. Encouragement
 - i. Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?
 - ii. Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble;
 - iii. Ezra 6:14 And the elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo
 - b. Rebuke
 - i. Habakkuk 2:12 Woe to him who builds a town with blood [...]
 - ii. Amos 6:4 Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches [...]
 - c. Implication drawn from existing revelation
 - i. Isaiah 40:6 All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
 - ii. Jonah 2:8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

III. Prophecy in the New Testament

1. Gospels

Prophet as Messenger of God

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Matthew 24:14 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

Luke 11:49 I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,

Prophets as Miracle workers

John 9:17

Prophecy as Divinely-Given Insight

Prophecy as Prayer/Praise

Luke 1:67

Luke 2:36

2. Acts

General Term for Spirit inspired speech

Acts 2:16-18

Acts 13:1

Cf. 2 Peter 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you,

Prediction

Acts 11:27

Acts 21:8-14

False prophets

Acts 13:6

A message of encouragement

Acts 15: 32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.

Praise

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

3. Prophecy in the Rest of the NT (excluding 1 Corinthians)

Revelation

Other Paul

Romans 12:6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to [the] faith

1 Thessalonians 5:20-1 Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good

Ephesians 2:20 / 3:5

Titus 1:12 One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true.

1 Timothy 1:18

1 Timothy 4:14

IV. Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 11-14

1. The Effect of Prophecy

a. Edification (14:1-5, 31)

b. Conviction (14:20-25)

2. Prophecy and Teaching

14:6 Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some **revelation** or *knowledge* or **prophecy** or *teaching*?

Philippians 3:15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Ephesians 1:17 [I pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,

John Macarthur:

Does this mean God has stopped speaking? Certainly not, but He speaks today through His all-sufficient Word. Does the Spirit of God move our hearts and impress us with specific duties or callings? Certainly, but He works through the Word of God to do that. Such experiences do not involve *new revelation* but *illumination*,⁵ when the Holy Spirit applies the Word to our hearts and open our spiritual eyes to its truth. We must guard carefully against allowing our experience and our own subjective thoughts and imaginations to eclipse the authority and the certainty of the more sure Word.⁶

Tom Schreiner:

What some people today call “prophecies” are actually impressions from God. He can use impressions to guide and lead us, but they aren't infallible and must always be tested by Scripture. We should also consult with wise counselors before acting on such impressions. I love my charismatic brothers and sisters, but what they call “prophecy” today isn't actually the biblical gift of prophecy. God-given impressions aren't the same thing as prophecies.⁷

3. Prophecy and Evaluation

4. Prophecy, Men and Women

5. Conclusions: Prophecy Today?

Continuity and Cessation

Prophecy in contemporary Church meetings?

Prophecy, teaching, men and women

⁵ Emphasis original.

⁶ John Macarthur, *Strange Fire*: 241.

⁷ Tom Schreiner, ‘Why I am a Cessationist’, online <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-i-am-a-cessationist> [accessed 26 October 2016].