

Hearing from Heaven



Class Section 1: What Is Prophecy?

As was discussed in "[Prayer, Part 1: Principles and Practice](#)," prayer is not meant to be a one-way conversation with the Lord in which you do all the talking! Your relationship with the Lord should also include listening to Him. Prayer is communion with the Lord, directly conversing with the Lord. You come to Him with quietness and respect and you sincerely present your petition, and you wait silently to get the answer. If you really want to hear Him, He'll talk to you.



When the Lord speaks and gives a message through one of His people, we refer to such inspired utterances as "prophecy."

* "Forthtelling"

Many people think of "prophecy" as predicting the future, but this is not always the case. The word "prophecy" is taken from a Greek word *propheteia* that means "the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God."

Prophets do a lot of foretelling under the inspiration of God's Spirit. But a further meaning of prophecy is to speak under divine inspiration, to forthtell the Words of God—to simply give God's Word, whatever it may be, whenever it may be, at any time, at any place, to any people, whenever it is God's will.

* Prophecy comes from God

2 Peter 1:21—For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:21—God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Hosea 12:10—I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.

Class Section 2: About Prophecy in the Bible

Let's look at some of the ways God has used the gift of prophecy to speak to His people through history.

* Prophecy and prophets in the Old Testament

Genesis 12:1-2, 4 - The Lord said to Abraham, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.”

...So Abraham departed as the Lord had instructed,



Numbers 9:8—And Moses said to them, "Stand still, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you."

Numbers 11:24-25—So Moses went out and told the people the Words of the Lord, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. (25) Then the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied.

1 Samuel 3:9-10—Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. (10) Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."

1 Samuel 19:20—Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

Jeremiah 1:4-9 - The Lord gave me [Jeremiah] this message: "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations."

"O Sovereign Lord," I said, "I can't speak for you! I'm too young!"

The Lord replied, "Don't say, 'I'm too young,' for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and will protect you. I, the Lord, have spoken!" Then the Lord reached out and touched my mouth and said, "Look, I have put my words in your mouth!"

* The Early Church and the gift of prophecy

It is very interesting to study over the experience of the Early Church and how they not only got their directions from the written, recorded Word of God, but also relied on the gift of prophecy. Here are just a few examples of the first Christians' reliance on the Living Word (received through prophecy):



Acts 8:26-27 - An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. So he arose and went.

Acts 11:27-30—And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of

Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 13:1-3—Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

* The gift of prophecy was a respected ministry in the Early Church

1 Corinthians 12:28—And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

1 Thessalonians 5:20—Do not despise prophecies.

Class Section 3: God Speaks Today

We have a permanent, written record of God's unchangeable Words in the Bible, but God is still speaking today, through prophecies, visions, and signs. These current messages from the Lord are His "Living Word."

You may ask, "Why isn't reading the Bible enough? Why can't we just get our answers from the recorded, printed Word?"



Yes, you should get as many answers from the recorded Word as you can, but where the printed Word doesn't go far enough to answer your specific needs, the Lord has given His Word through prophecy as a further way of finding His direction. The written Word gives you the fundamentals, the basics, but often the Lord wants to give you specifics for your particular situation through speaking to you directly in prophecy.

The Lord wants to speak to us to guide and encourage us. He promises:

Psalm 84:11—No good thing will [God] withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Psalm 138:3—In the day when I cried out, You answered me

Isaiah 30:21—Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it."

Jeremiah 33:3—Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

Mark 13:11—Do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

*** Prophecy will not contradict the written Word**

A prophecy that is truly inspired by the Lord will not contradict the written recorded Word of God in the Bible, though it may fill in "gaps" in our understanding. The Word is the measurement, the standard by which it should be judged. (We'll discuss more about this in the next class.)

Listen to the Voice of God

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965, Nobel Prize winner, missionary doctor in Cameroon and French Equatorial Africa [now called Gabon]) was a great musician and doctor who went to Africa to be a missionary and help the sick. One time he was traveling up a river with a boat loaded with supplies for a hospital he had built. As they were traveling he noticed a big tree had fallen in the water. If they hit it, the boat could sink and they would drown.

After his visit to the hospital, Albert returned back down the river. It was late at night and very dark. He warned the men not to go too near the bank of the river but to stay out closer toward the middle.

Suddenly the Lord gave Albert a check in the Spirit that they were getting too close to the shore. All the men said they weren't and that it was fine where they were, so Albert sat down again. *I guess they know best*, he thought. *After all, they go up and down this river all the time and their eyes are trained to see into the dark forest. My eyes are not as good as theirs!*

Suddenly the Lord spoke again to Albert's heart, this time with a much stronger warning. *You need to obey Me or you'll all drown!* Albert jumped up and commanded the men to instantly move the boat farther out to the middle of the river. They had no sooner obeyed than suddenly they saw the huge, dark mass of a giant tree that had fallen in the water. Had they not turned aside at that instant the boat would have rammed it and sunk!



Class Section 4: How To Hear From God in Prophecy

* How to Hear from the Lord

- Find a quiet place.
- Begin your time with the Lord by praising Him and/or by reading His Word. Then, either ask the Lord a specific question or just generally ask Him what He wants to tell you.
- Closing your eyes will help eliminate distractions.
- Be still and focus your mind on the Lord. Concentrate on Him.
- Sometimes the Lord may speak by bringing to mind a verse or passage from the Bible. He brings it to life or He applies it to a particular situation or decision you are faced with. If He reminds you of something like this while you are praying, then look it up and read it right then, asking the Lord to help you apply it.
- Sometimes the Lord may speak a new message that you've never heard before. The words will probably not be audible, but a "still, small voice" in your mind.
- Speak or write down or record what you get, then the Lord will give you more. By recording what He has given you, it shows the Lord your faith that you believe it is from Him. Then He'll give you more.
- Try not to think, analyze, or judge the message as it is coming; just accept it and thank God for it.
- Some messages are short; some are lengthy. Sometimes, instead of words, the Lord will give you a picture or vision.

* Recognizing God's Voice

1 King 19:9,11-12—And there he [Elijah] went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the Word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ... Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

God speaks in a still, small voice. It doesn't have to be with an audible voice. It can just be in a still, small voice that you feel inside of you. Sometimes it's not even words, but just an impression that you have. God doesn't always communicate in words; He can just give you a feeling or a picture or an idea.

As you continue to study His Word in faith, letting it fill your heart and mind, the more your ability will grow to recognize His still, small voice when you ask Him to speak to you.

John 10:27a—My sheep hear My Voice.

Thank You Jesus for how I am learning over and over how much You love me, and how very great Your love is for me, and how much You want to show it to me. I come before You now as young Samuel of old, waiting patiently and quietly for You to speak to Me. Please help me now to cease from my own thoughts and listen to You. Help me to wait patiently to receive Your Words.



Help me to trust that You are going to give those Words. Help me to know that it's not in my own strength, but as I commit myself to You, You will lead and guide. As I ask now and listen to You, I believe You are here for me. Now as I stop for these moments, please help me to hear Your voice.