

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

How to Judge Prophecy

In the January issue of *The Teaching Legacy* of Derek Prince, we began our 2021 series on “Standing Strong” with the understanding that we are in the midst of challenging days—times that are going to test our endurance. These times will require us to learn how to stand strong in Jesus Christ.

One particular strength we will need to develop is a heightened ability to hear God clearly and faithfully obey what He says for us to do. This realization brings us to the very important matter of how you and I can become more discerning in regard to prophetic ministry emerging in these tumultuous times.

In a word, we will need to learn *How to Judge Prophecy*.

New Testament Standards

The Bible clearly indicates that prophecy in the New Testament is to be subjected to scriptural judgment. In fact, it is unscriptural to accept prophesying in New Testament congregations that is not submitted to such judgment.

In this message, I want to present basic instruction on this topic, along with an outline of the various standards of judgment which are presented in the Bible for this purpose.

Let’s begin by looking at certain general facts about prophecy, starting with 1 Corinthians 14:22b:

...but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

Paul says prophesying in the New Testament is not used by God to speak to unbelievers, but to believers. This is a very important basic fact.

Testing Prophecy

In the same chapter, Paul offers clear instruction in verse 29 regarding the exercise of the prophetic gift:

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge [or discern].

Paul is reminding us here that prophets do not normally operate as individuals on their own. In the New Testament, people with prophetic gifting are part of the body of Christ. They function as members in the body. They are related to other members—not persons acting on their own.

Concerning basic ways to regard and test prophecy, we need to ask: “Is it of God? Is it true? Is it or is it not really something we should heed?” This matter of testing prophecy is again brought out in 1 Thessalonians 5:19–21:



Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.

We are not to quench the Holy Spirit, nor are we to refuse the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit as some people have done. When verse 20 adds, “Do not despise prophecies,” what is it implying?

Over my many years of Christian experience, I have heard many screwy, half-baked, useless utterances put forth under the guise of prophecy. With such misuse occurring, I began to notice a shield actually coming up within me as soon as I would hear anybody begin to prophesy. Although I remained on my guard and careful in such situations, I never allowed myself to become negative. Above all, the solution to the problem was not to quench the Holy Spirit, but rather to, “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (v. 21).

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Nine Principles for Judging Prophecy

At this point in our lesson, I want to explore some practical principles for judging prophecy. Just as a doctor will use multiple tests to diagnose a problem, the same pertains to judging prophecy. You cannot apply just one or two measures. In fact, I am listing nine tests.

1) Does it edify?

For the first test in judging prophecy, let’s turn to 1 Corinthians 14:3:

But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

To me, this general statement about prophesying is the basic test. A prophetic word should speak edification, exhortation, and comfort to believers. It should not be negative, destructive, or condemnatory. Whenever I hear a message that is condemnatory,

destructive, or negative, I do not accept it as genuine New Testament prophesying based upon the qualifications established in the verse above.

Over the years, I have seen scores of “shipwrecks” through the misuse of prophecy. I have seen homes broken up, churches divided, and people ruined—financially and in other ways—through the wrong use of prophecy. Prophecy is an extremely powerful instrument. But if it is misused, it can bring about destruction in people’s lives.

2) Does it agree with Scripture?

We see the second test of prophecy in the light of 2 Timothy 3:16:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The authority behind all Scripture is the Holy Spirit—and He will never contradict Himself. In other words, anything given in prophecy will never be opposed to the letter or the spirit of Scripture. This is a vital fact.

3) Does it glorify Jesus?

The third test involves its relationship with Jesus, which we find in John 16:13–14:

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

The Holy Spirit always glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that He may reveal what is to come. But He will always do so in the context of glorifying Jesus.

So, whenever anybody comes to you with any kind of revelation or new doctrine or prophecy, check to see what attitude it reflects toward the Lord Jesus.

Does the message exalt Him? Does it glorify Him? Does it afford Jesus the preeminence which is due to Him alone?

4) Does it bear good fruit?

The fourth test of prophecy is the *fruit* it produces – whether good or evil. In Romans 14:17, Paul states:

...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Please notice that righteousness comes first. Any representation of joy and peace which bypasses righteousness is a deception. God's order is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes Christians talk so casually about the Holy Spirit that people can tend to forget that He is holy. Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruit of the Spirit we should be looking for:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

If our lives consist of these qualities, there are no regulations to stop us from doing anything we want to do. Isn't that beautiful? There are no laws to forbid these fruits—neither by any government nor by God. When we are living in that realm, you and I are as free as a bird.

5) Did it come true?

The fifth test is fairly simple: If a prophecy contains predictions concerning the future which are not fulfilled, the prophecy did not come from God. Deuteronomy 18:20–22 talks about the possibility of a person making a prediction which does not come to pass. The Word of God says very simply and practically that this prediction was not spoken by the Lord. If the Lord had spoken it, it would have come to pass.

There is a situation referred to in Romans 12:6 where people begin correctly, but then they go too far.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion [or measure] of faith;...

Here is a situation that happens on occasion. People start prophesying in the Spirit, but then they get excited, puffed up, enthusiastic, and they go beyond that which the Holy Spirit actually gave them. I have seen many instances where this has happened. The persons were not out to deceive, nor were they false prophets. They just moved beyond the realm of the Spirit and reverted back to the flesh.

6) Does it encourage obedience to God?

Now we come to the sixth test, which is very important. Remember that the fifth test was that if the prediction doesn't come to pass, then the person prophesying is a false prophet. However, it is possible to wrongly conclude that if the prediction does come to pass, the person giving the message must automatically be considered a true prophet. But that isn't necessarily the case.

In fact, we are warned against jumping to this conclusion in Deuteronomy 13:1–5. Basically, even if a prophecy contains correct predictions or supernatural revelations, if it promotes disobedience against God, the word is not from God.

7) Does it bring a sense of freedom, peace, and confidence?

We find the seventh test in 2 Corinthians 3:17:

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

The Holy Spirit never produces bondage or brings us into bondage. Scripture attests that there are three conditions which are *not* the products of the Holy Spirit.

* *Romans 8:15: "You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear."*

* *1 Corinthians 14:33: "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace."*

* *2 Timothy 1:7: "God has not given us a spirit of fear."*

Bondage, confusion and fear are not the products of the Holy Spirit.

8) Does it bring fresh life?

The eighth test is taken from 2 Corinthians 3:6: "...but the Spirit gives life." True prophecy given by the Holy Spirit will always inject fresh life into a person or a meeting—and it will harmonize with God's overall purposes.

9) Does your spirit bear witness?

The last test is subjective, but legitimate. You must remember that you have something inside you which was put there by God to warn you. We see this confirmed in 1 John 2:27:

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

"The anointing" referred to in this verse is not exactly the same as the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This anointing operates in us as we are walking in the Spirit. When you walk in the Spirit, there is an awareness inside you that bears witness to the truth and rejects that which is false.

Help from the Lord

In this teaching, I have provided eight objective tests and one subjective test. If you are warned subjectively by the Spirit within you that something is wrong, start operating the other eight tests. If the person prophesying is wrong, the other tests will show it. Added to that, this last test will warn you personally.

Do you want to stand strong in this area of discernment and correctly judging prophecy? Let's voice that desire together in a prayer to the Lord right now.

Thank You in advance, Lord, for Your guidance in this important matter. I want to receive and judge prophecy in a way that will be helpful and constructive for me and for those around me.

Please help me to operate effectively in this vital area. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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