

THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY AMONG THE COMTEMPORARY  
BAPTIST AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

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## ABSTRACT

Prophecy is one of the most misunderstood and misused teachings in Christian churches today. People have been hurt by the false visions and supposed revelations uttered through men and women claiming to speak for God. Those men and women that trust in, cling to, and rely upon the scriptures for divine guidance and revelation get fewer and fewer. Many Christians believe that prophecy died either with the last Old Testament canonical prophet, John the Baptist, with Jesus, with the last apostle or with the closure of the canon. Although the claim of prophecy always required careful and difficult discernment, the experience and preaching of many a prophetic personality had great and often very positive impact on the life of the church. This study put light on the challenge of how to discern between true and false, healthy and unhealthy prophecy and the prophetic revelation which proved to be leading to purified, renewed and revitalized faith. This will enable pastors and church members to overcome pit holes of false prophecy and enjoy the benefit of prophecy. This research employed the use of secondary sources as the major sources for the information that was used for the research. Secondary sources such as: textbooks, periodicals, commentaries, magazines and internet sources. Questionnaire was also used in the course of this work. The method used in this study is a descriptive report design in which information was obtained through the use of questionnaire with the aim of collecting data to answer questions about the subject of study titled "The Interpretation of Prophecy Among The Contemporary Baptist And Its Implications For Ministry". To ensure accuracy, consistency and for easy understanding simple percentage was used for analysis. From the stand point of this research, one cannot afford to despise the gift of prophecy; nor can one allow its capacity for misuse and misunderstandings. Rather it is necessary to diligently seek to curb its abuses by the guidelines of scripture. The local church pastors should be well educated in the characteristics of prophecy; with view to enabling them to identify prophecy when it occurs in the process of his ministrations. They should also be able to apply the knowledge gained in studying the nature of prophecy while performing their prophetic function. It is also expected for them to help and teach the flock of God in their care to discover the latent gifts of God in them. Baptist ministers who have the gift and call of prophetic office should develop themselves and come out boldly to use the gifts that God has endowed them with. Nigerian Baptist Theological Schools should add prophetic ministry to her program since it is not pastoral office that God has blessed the church with and the Nigerian Baptist Convention can also establish theological schools that will be the school of the prophet since this is biblical.

## 5.2 CONCLUSION

From the stand point of this research, one can neither afford to despise the gift of prophecy nor can one allow its capacity for misuse and misunderstandings which prevents

embracing it. Rather, it is necessary to diligently seek to curb its abuses by the guidelines of Scripture and "test all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21), so that the great constructive value of prophecy may be experienced by our churches. Through this unique spiritual gift the church is enabled to grow, mature and move forward according to the will of God. "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy ... so that the church may be edified" (1 Corinthians 14:1, 5).

There are some clear implications for how pastors should operate in the contemporary church. It would suggest that the church needs to make room for proven pastors to operate with a minimum of restrictions as to how, and to whom, and about what, they speak. This has the potential to release a powerful prophetic ministry into the church and from the church into the wider world. As John Goldingay puts it "If prophetic ministry is exercised today, then, it should be expected that this will reduce the domestication of God that characterizes us as evangelicals and charismatics" (Goldingay 40). Such a change would certainly make our experience of God more vital and life-transforming.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Since prophecy is a gift that God has given the Church, it should be appreciated and let it make the impact that God expects it to make in the Church. Therefore the following are recommendations:

1. The local church pastors should be well educated in the characteristics of prophecy with a view to enabling them to identify prophecy when it occurs in the process of their ministrations.
2. The pastor also should be able to apply the knowledge gained in studying the nature of prophecy while performing his prophetic function.

3. It is also expected of the pastor to help and teach the flock of God in his care to discover the latent gifts of God in them.
4. Baptist ministers who have the gift and call of prophetic office should develop themselves and come out boldly to use the gifts that God has endowed them with.
5. Anyone who is going to exercise his prophetic role or gift must see to it that he receives the word of God and not from any other source.
6. After prophetic word has been uttered, it must be carefully scrutinized with the word of God before it is accepted as being valid. Charles Brocks says concerning the sufficiency and the authority of the Bible “we must remember that what God’s word says is more important and powerful than anything we can say about it” (Charles 35).
7. Nigerian Baptist Theological Schools should add prophetic ministry to her programme since it is not only pastoral office that God has blessed the Church with and the convention can also establish theological schools that will be the school of the prophets since this is biblical.