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# HOW TO JUDGE A PROPHECY

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

*“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.” ~1 Corinthians 14:29*

*“Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good...” ~1 Thessalonians 5:19-21*

Just as the creation of the world began by God speaking “*Light*” into existence, so too, did the salvation of the world start with God’s Word becoming light in the very midst of darkness (see John 1:1-13). Time and time again we see the same pattern of the Lord’s intervention—light comes into the dark places to accomplish His creative and redemptive purposes.

In other words, when God sets Himself to do something new in the world, and when He goes about recovering and restoring what has been broken or lost in it, He introduces light; His light, His glory. Jesus, God’s Light, came into the world, and there is no greater or grander example of the Lord’s loving and saving work than Jesus’ birth—and ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus’ birth was prophesied many centuries before the event, and John the Baptist was sent “*before*” Jesus to get things lined up for His coming. Christmas is laden with prophetic fulfillment—from the “*star*” seen by the *Wise Men*, to the *Virgin* in Bethlehem.

So, when we look at details and components of the Christmas story, we can discover truths and principles about how God is likely to keep entering our life experience. What practical instruction does the Christmas story give us about prophecy—and how to receive it for our lives?

Most believers are familiar with the reality of prophetic words—revelations and disclosures that foreshadow God’s plans and purposes for our lives. But frequently, the subject of prophecy is shrouded in mystery and uncertainty. What does the Bible say about prophetic words from the Lord to us? What are prophecies? Should we expect to receive them in our daily lives? Why does God give them? How can we better hold onto them?

## WHY DOES GOD GIVE PROPHECIES?

1. To proclaim His dominion over all the Earth—God “*Most High*.”
2. To point out His future/plans for us (personally).
3. To give us knowledge of [impending] salvation and rescue (through forgiveness).
4. To guide our feet in the way of shalom—peace, well-being, prosperity of heart, wholeness.
5. To edify [build up and strengthen]; to exhort [encourage along]; to console [keep in winner’s circle] us (1 Corinthians 14:3).
6. To convince us that God knows us inside and out (1 Corinthians 14:24-25).

## WHAT DO PROPHETIC WORDS SOUND LIKE?

1. Prophecy must always line up with God’s written word (Scripture).
2. Prophecy reveals the heart of God for you or for others.
3. A word from the Lord sheds light on His purposes and plans.
4. Prophetic words “*bear witness*” (or await confirmation) in your heart—connecting with thoughts, hopes, questions, events already clustering in your life.
5. When prophetic words are spoken to you by someone, the message is fairly clear, even though its meaning may unfold differently than you imagine. When God speaks to you directly, it resembles an impression or a prompting, more than a voice.

## HOW CAN WE RECEIVE AND HOLD ONTO PROPHECIES?

1. Read your Bible regularly and expectantly—looking for verses, words or phrases that “catch your attention.”
2. Choose to believe that the word is from the Lord, who knows how to get your attention.
3. Do not try to make the word happen; He performs His word, not you.

4. Thank God for sending His word to you. Write it down, and date it.
5. Meditate on the verse(s)—reading the context and following cross-references.
6. Be on the lookout for similarities to the word in your daily life experience—things that you hear, stuff that happens, correlating understandings you come to, etc.