



Advanced Study AS007: Prophecy 1: Methods

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Read 2 Peter 1:18-21; Heb 1:1

Introduction. Nearly half the Bible is devoted to the canonical prophets. In addition, there are numerous prophetic passages in other Books of both the Old and New Testaments. This Study is to examine the nature and methods of biblical prophecy.

1. God's Message. Prophecy is not just about future events. It is less about foretelling than about forthtelling. The futuristic component usually arises from a declaration of what will happen if God's instruction or warning is obeyed or ignored. Search in the prophetic books for some examples of cause and effect, along the lines of "Listen and obey this message and you will be blessed with this result" or "Ignore this message and you will suffer this result".

2. How Prophets Heard from God. Five methods of hearing God's message are identified in Scripture. Look up examples of each (find other examples if you can).

- (i) Hearing God's voice (Isaiah 6:8). Need this always be audible?
- (ii) Visions (Isaiah 6:1). An ancient term for a prophet was *the seer* (1 Sam 9:9).
- (iii) Dreams (Jer 23:28). What is the difference between a dream and a vision?
- (iv) Burdens (Isaiah 13:1). An emotional heaviness until the message has been proclaimed. Why might this occur?
- (v) Ecstasy (Dan 10:8). Defined as "An exalted state of feeling ... leading to temporary loss of control."* Why might this occur?

Contrast the responses to God's call to the prophetic ministry made by Jonah (in Chapter 1) and Isaiah (in Chapter 6). Does God override a prophet's free will?

3. How Prophets Told the Message. Three methods are identified in Scripture (find other examples if you can):

- (i) Speaking (Amos 7:11).
- (ii) Writing (Jer 30:2).
- (iii) Acting (Ezekiel 4:1-14).

To Think About: How does all the above apply to the Gift of Prophecy (1 Cor 12:10) today?

For Further Study: More about the nature and methods of prophecy can be found in the Study Guide on Isaiah, available as a free download from orders@learn-your-bible.org.uk (see *Complete Courses*).

* Concise Oxford Dictionary and Collins English Dictionary.