

## Prophets, Prophecy & Prophesying

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by Bill Crews

*“Prophet”* and *“prophecy”* are nouns. *“Prophesy”* is a verb. A prophet delivers prophecy, and in so doing prophesies. In *Webster’s New World Dictionary*, third edition, copyrighted 1997, the first definition of prophet is “a person who speaks for God.” Not one who claims to speak for God, but one who really speaks for God. Both the Hebrew and Greek words translated *“prophet”* can be defined as *“a person in whose mouth God puts His words so that they can be spoken to others.”* The words of a prophet, whether oral or written, are *“inspired of God,”* given by God through His Spirit.

Deuteronomy 18:18 says: *“I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”* You won’t find a better definition of a prophet than this. Peter, in Acts 3:22, quotes Deuteronomy 18:15 and applies it to Jesus, who came into this world as a prophet and much more. When Jehovah God said to the young man Jeremiah, *“I have appointed thee a prophet unto all the nations,”* Jeremiah replied, *“Ah, Lord Jehovah: behold, I know not how to speak, for I am a child”* (Jer. 1:5-6). But God then said, *“Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak”* (Jer. 1 :7). Jehovah then put forth His hand and touched Jeremiah’s mouth, and said, *“Behold I have put my words in thy mouth”* (Jer. 1 :9).

Whenever there were true prophets of God, there were also many false prophets, those who would claim to be prophets of God and claim to be speaking the words of God. But these were lying about being prophets, about being sent by God, and about speaking the words that God had given them. For position, power and money they spoke the words that the rulers and the people wanted to hear and destroyed faith in the words of the true prophets. Please read Jeremiah 14:13-15; 23:16, 21; 27:14-15; 29:8-9; Ezekiel 13:1-7; Matthew 7:15; 2 Peter 2:1-3 and 1 John 4:1.

While a prophet may, in speaking words from God, **foretell**; while prophesying may be foretelling, and while a prophecy may be a foretelling, the words *“prophet,” “prophesy”* and *“prophecy”* do not mean “a foreteller,” “foretell” and “a foretelling.” In the Scriptures any time one speaks words that he has received from God, whether about the past (as when Moses wrote the book of Genesis), about the present (as when Moses wrote most of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), or about the future (as when Moses wrote Deuteronomy 18:15-19) he functions as a prophet, he prophesies, he delivers prophecy. William E. Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines the noun (PROPHETEIA) translated *“prophet”* like this: “signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God (PRO, forth, PHEMI, to speak: see Prophet) ...” He also quotes from Notes on Thessalonians, which he co-authored: “Though much of O. T. prophecy was purely predictive, see Micah 5:2, e.g., and cf. John 11:51, prophecy is not necessarily, nor even primarily, fore-telling. It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means, Matt. 26:68, it is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future, see Gen. 20:7; Deut. 18:18; Rev. 10:11; 11 :3 ...” While we have formed the habit of making the word *“prophecy”* mean only “a foretelling” or a speaking in regard to things that are to occur in the future, the Bible does not do so. In all of the New Testament only one time do we read of *“prophecy”* being “fulfilled.” That one time is Matt. 13:14: *“And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which saith ...”* (Matt. 13:14). There the idea may be that the words of Isaiah (Is. 6:9-10) spoken to God’s people in Isaiah’s day also describe certain unbelieving Jews who stood in opposition to Jesus. In other places what is said to be *“fulfilled”(?) “Which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet”* (Matt. 1:22 and other places); *“that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet”* (Matt. 2: 17; in other places “Isaiah,” etc.); *“which was spoken through the*

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