What does it mean to be prophetic?

Stephen Hill

I have decided to put together an article on what it means to be prophetic. It is often said that Fatherheart Ministries is prophetic, that (in particular) James and Denise are prophetic, and that the revelation is prophetic. Because the majority of the people involved in this ministry come from a Pentecostal/Charismatic church background the only context we have for understanding the word ‘prophetic’ is about moving in the gift of prophecy. However, that is not what we mean when we use the term ‘prophetic.’ I presented this as a teaching/discussion at the team meeting in Taupo a few years ago, but I have decided to expand it into an article that I trust will be helpful.

When we talk about ‘being prophetic’ what are we talking about? I want to explore this and give some guidelines and descriptions of what being prophetic actually looks like. I am sure there are others who have insights to share but this is some of what has been on my mind and heart recently.

1. To be prophetic is to be God’s mouthpiece. – to speak from God’s perspective.

The most obvious definition of ‘prophetic’ is to speak the
words of God. You could say that all authentic ministry is communication from God but what is unique about being prophetic? This is what I want to explore.

Most of our current understanding of the prophetic is that it is ‘foretelling’ something. In other words, it is saying what will happen in the future. Many personal prophecies that many of us have received relate to our lives in the future. However, there is another aspect of the prophetic, which is ‘forth-telling.’ This is not talking so much about the future but speaking forth the heart and word of God right now and right here for this present time. Fatherheart Ministries is primarily prophetic in the ‘forth-telling’ way. We proclaim what God wants to communicate in this day. It is prophetic because the majority of people in the Church do not have the revelation of what God is saying. It needs to be declared by prophetic ministry.

2. To be prophetic is to bring revelation where there is no revelation.

2 Peter 1.19 says:

“...and we have something more sure - the prophetic word to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts - knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's
A lamp shining in a dark place is the bringing of revelation to the heart that has not got that revelation. Prophetic revelation is like the dawning of a new day. Personally speaking, when I first heard the prophetic revelation of the love of the Father and that His love could be imparted and that I could live experientially as a son, it was as if a new dawn broke in my heart. It took prophetic preaching to do this – to shine a lamp of revelation into the hidden recesses of my heart.

John 1 – John the Baptist came to bear witness to the light – but he was not the light.

John 5:35 - He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

The prophetic is not the dawn itself, but it is a lamp which shines in the darkness (lack of revelation) until the day dawns. The day dawns when God is fully revealed within the heart of His people for who He really is. When the day dawns there is no longer any need for a lamp. When we arrive at the destination there is no longer any need for a sign pointing to it.
3. To be prophetic is to declare that one epoch/era is finished and another one has begun.

What is an ‘epoch?’ An epoch is defined as – “a period of time in history or a person's life, typically one marked by notable events or particular characteristics.”

This is very important. Prophetic ministry has already transitioned from the old epoch (based on the last revelation) that has run its course, and is living in and speaking from the new epoch. The majority of the Church is still living within the old epoch or paradigm based on revelation that has run its allotted course. The ‘table’ below illustrates the Old and New epochs. Here are some examples of characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD PARADIGM</th>
<th>NEW PARADIGM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orphan-spirited Christianity</td>
<td>Sonship Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Covenant</td>
<td>New Covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God, Yahweh, etc.</td>
<td>Abba Father, Papa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission to Jesus as Lord and King</td>
<td>Union with Jesus in sonship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity as servants</td>
<td>Identity as Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God inhabits Tent/temple/sanctuary</td>
<td>God inhabits human heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System of worship: ‘Jerusalem’ or ‘this mountain’</td>
<td>Worship the Father in spirit and truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External influences Internal</td>
<td>Internal influences External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power, covenant, justice etc.</td>
<td>Love – fulfils the whole Law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise</td>
<td>Fulfilment and substance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The prophetic declaration is ushering the Church from the Old Epoch into the New Epoch. In our schools, it is our aim to bring people from the old into the new. People who attend our schools have an experience of Christianity like what is described in the left-hand column. The aim of the school is to bring them over (experientially) to what is described in the right-hand column.

We see an example of Jesus making a prophetic declaration to the woman at the well in John 4. He declares to her:

"Woman, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...but the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him."

In this statement He declares the cessation of the old and ushers in the new.

The great prophetic question that God put to some of the prophets in the Old Testament is, “What do you see?” Prophetic ministry is really the answer to that question. Prophetic ministry is really telling what it is seeing. It is prophetic because those who hear it are not seeing what the prophet sees.
4. To be prophetic is to manifest the passion and emotion of the heart of God.

The prophetic is not only a channel for the words of God, but it manifests the accompanying emotion of the Father in speaking to His children. It is not enough to speak the word of God – it must be said how God would say it. To be prophetic is to bring the word of God with His emotion.

I have come across some quotations from theologians which I have found to be very helpful. These quotes have real spiritual life and insight within them and provide a lot of food for thought.

The Jewish rabbi, Abraham Joshua Heschel, (in a book called The Prophets), says that the prophetic word is ‘a blast from heaven.’ He uses an expression - the ‘pathos’ of God. The word ‘pathos’ carries the meaning of ‘anguished longing.’ Heshcel writes:

“The task of the prophet is to convey the word of God. Yet the word is aglow with the pathos. One cannot understand the word without sensing the pathos. And one could not impassion others and remain unstirred. The prophet should not be regarded as an ambassador who must be dispassionate in order to be effective.”
What he is saying here is that the prophetic word is only effective if the person who gives it has a sense of the emotion that is in God’s heart. This is the place where prophetic speaking is uttered from.

Prophetic ministry comes from a place that is connected and exposed to the heart of the Father. Another theologian, Gerhard Von Rad, says that the prophet “has taken a deeper plunge into the reality of God.” It is from that ‘deeper reality’ that the prophetic word comes in order to bring the people into God’s heart. It is very clear to me that someone who has come out of orphans into sonship has taken a deeper plunge into the reality of God.

The Father is revealed by the son who is in His bosom. Living in intimacy, close to the heart of the Father is the place from which He is prophetically revealed.

5. To be prophetic is to be both an iconoclast and an innovator. It is to uproot and tear down -then to build and to plant.

We believe that the revelation of the Father and of sonship is the real Gospel. It is the purpose of God from a past eternity to have humanity in relationship to Him, living in the relationship of the Son with the Father. However, that is not what we have been taught. The vast majority of Christians are coming to A and B Schools with the baggage of beliefs and theology that does not reflect the true nature of God as Father.
There needs to be a ‘destructive’ element in the preaching at schools. Old beliefs, mindsets, hardened hearts need to be demolished in order for there to be an opening for the love of the Father and for the revelation that we can have relationship with Him.

An iconoclast is someone who engages in “iconoclasm i.e. destruction of religious symbols or, by extension, established dogma or conventions.” The very nature of the prophetic is that it uproots and destroys before it can build and plant. To be prophetic is to be destructive but also to construct something new and fresh.

Prophetic speaking has a devastating element to it. It attacks what is, in the words of the song, ‘comfortably numb.’ The most effective A Schools/B Schools are those which have a devastating effect. They begin with a violence of love and of the word of God to pull down, uproot and destroy false mindsets, beliefs, break through hardened hearts, demolish the strongholds that resist the love of the Father being experienced in a person’s life. The apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:4,5:

“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God...”
True prophetic ministry is not only an iconoclast, however. It is also an innovator. It brings something that is new and fresh. It pioneers a new way that comes out of fresh revelation. Although it is not really creating new theology, the revelation that it brings seems like new theology to those who receive it. Prophetic A Schools are innovative in that they usher people into a new spiritual reality,

In saying this, however, we need to realise the true prophetic ministry does not depart from what is revealed in the Scriptures but it is not balanced nor does it declare the ‘whole counsel of God.’ Rather it gives a specific revelation for a specific time. That time might be a moment in a person’s life, it might be a season or it might be an era. The prophetic is not meant to expand on what is already known - it is meant to bring in what is new. Actually it takes from what is eternal, what has always been there in the heart of God and declares it. The prophetic revelation is not really new – it is only new to the hearers because the truth has been obscured for centuries and millennia.

6. To be prophetic means to have a breakthrough anointing.

The prophetic doesn’t teach - it shifts the spiritual atmosphere. The prophetic doesn’t have to be fully understood to be effective. The words themselves released into the atmosphere are like seeds or timebombs.

It is important to know that Prophetic mode of communi-
cation is more *preaching* than teaching. I recommend James Jordan’s talk about Preaching in which he talks about the differences between teaching and preaching. This can be made available to those who want it.

Watchman Nee has said about preaching that it “creates a beachhead in the spirit.” That is a remarkable statement but what does it mean?

A ‘beachhead’ is a military term. When an army wants to invade and take ground it sends its toughest fighting troops to land on a beach in order to take a small foothold of ground. This is what happened on D-Day (also known as The Normandy Landings) in 1944 when the Allied forces retook ground from the Nazis and went forward to win the war. The taking of the beachhead on Omaha Beach is graphically portrayed in the opening scenes of the film, *Saving Private Ryan*.

Taking a beachhead involves a massive concentration of death and injury. Once the beachhead is taken then the regular army can land and bring more troops and supplies and eventually expand that beachhead into a bigger area.

**Prophetic preaching creates a beachhead in the spirit.** It does not bring ‘the whole counsel of God.’ It is a dramatic and focused punch, maybe messy, maybe violent – but it is enough to open the heart and spirit so that a new reality can come in. You could say that A Schools are ‘a beachhead’ for
the revelation/experience of the love of the Father.

The mode of communication in A Schools is therefore primarily preaching rather than teaching.

7. To be prophetic is to speak from the periphery.

Let me make one final point. It is my personal conviction that what is prophetic must speak from a place that is on the periphery – that is outside the normal place where most of the Church is. The prophetic does not come from the ‘status quo.’ Rather, it speaks to the ‘status quo.’

In the Scriptures you find that prophetic speaking comes out of wilderness. Many of the Old Testament prophets (Moses) came from the wilderness, John the Baptist came from the wilderness. Jesus came into His ministry from the wilderness, as did Paul. Why is this? I believe it is because the prophetic must come from a place where there has been a significant break from what has gone before. Because the prophetic is foundational (Ephesians 2:20), there must be enough distance from the past to make a fresh start. The prophetic, in that sense, brings a rupture in continuity. The wilderness is a place where ‘clothing’ turns to rags, and where the usual comforts cease. In other words the things that give identity and comfort are not easy to come by. They must be supplied by God. The desert is a place where cultural noise is silenced and cultural trappings have been stripped bare. The prophetic comes out of a place of minimal
‘soulish’ theology, where ‘my opinions’ have been worn away. Fatherheart Ministries has emerged from a place of burnout, from a significant rupture in the normal way of doing Christianity and church. It has emerged from the desert. The continuity has come through Jack Winter, but his ministry went through a ‘rupture’ and then Fatherheart Ministries was born in partnership with Dorothy, and James and Denise.

The prophetic ministry is a ministry of Christ to His body. But the very nature of the prophetic means that it swims upstream, it goes against the flow. It does not have a central place within the normal life of the institutional Church. It speaks from the periphery of the institution. It is radically free from the institution, from the management structure, from the accepted norm. It draws its inspiration and its authority to speak from the place where God is and where He wants to bring His Church to. The Old Testament theologian, Walter Brueggemann, has said that the task of the prophet is to **critique** and to **energise**. Note that to critique is not the same as to criticise. Prophetic ministry must highlight where something has gone wrong and has gone astray from what God really wants. To that extent it is negative. It critiques the religious status quo. The key thing is that genuine prophetic ministry does not leave people with the negative but it also energises a positive returning to things the way God wants them to be.
These are some of my thoughts at this time. They are from a personal perspective. I am speaking about Fatherheart Ministries as a corporate entity. This ministry is prophetic. At an individual level some people are more prophetic than others. There is room for different individual giftings and callings within Fatherheart Ministries. Prophetic individuals may identify with what I am saying (to a greater or lesser degree) but I believe it will help to identify and understand the prophetic nature of Fatherheart Ministries.

Stephen Hill, Taupo, December 2013.

~

Stephen Hill is originally from Belfast, Northern Ireland. He now lives in Taupo with his wife, Becky and two children, Jacob and Jessica and has been a part of the team in Fatherheart Ministries since 2009.