

God's pleasure, and we should be thankful when they do. Indeed, as I indicated in chapters 7–9, there is a sense in which even God's general providence is miraculous. But we must not demand miracles, or be angry at God when he chooses not to work them for us. Even Paul could not work miracles all the time, for the Lord refused Paul's prayer for his own healing (2 Cor. 12:7–9).

Prophecy

But what about that special kind of miracle called *prophecy*? In prophecy, as we saw in chapter 24, God enables a human being to speak God's very word (Deut. 18:18–22). Does God still inspire prophets today?

Wayne Grudem believes that the people called prophets in the NT were rather different from those called prophets in the OT.² In the OT, the prophets spoke God's very word, and so what they said was absolutely true, reliable, infallible, and inerrant. But in the NT, according to Grudem, the gift of prophecy was a lesser gift. It was simply the ability to put a message from God into human but fallible words. In other words, in the NT, God revealed his thoughts to the prophets, but their actual words were not identical with his.

Grudem believes that there are today no prophets in the OT sense, but there are prophets in the NT sense. He recognizes that if there were prophets in the OT sense in the church today, then they would be adding to Scripture. Scripture would not then be sufficient, since there would be other words of God of the same authority. But Grudem does believe that there are prophets in the NT sense in the church today. Since their words are fallible, those words don't challenge the sufficiency of Scripture.

I am not convinced of Grudem's thesis. If it is true, then there may well be in the church today prophets in the NT sense. But I think it is not, and therefore there are no prophets, defined biblically, in the church today. There is nobody in the church today who can give us a message of the same authority as Scripture. So as I indicated in chapter 26, *only* Scripture serves as our ultimate authority. We live by Scripture *alone*, *sola Scriptura*.

Of course, the word *prophecy* can be used more loosely. People sometimes speak of preaching as prophecy, since it conveys the teaching of Scripture, and since it often receives special power from the Holy Spirit. People sometimes refer to the church as having the offices of prophet, as well as priest and king. Nothing I've said in this chapter should keep us from using the term *prophet* in that general way. All I want to emphasize is that there are in the church today no prophets who have the authority described in Deuteronomy 18.

Nor do I want to say that God cannot reveal himself in unusual, surprising ways. I've heard of believers dreaming of some great disaster coming, in time to warn others to avoid a real disaster. Could that be of God? Certainly. He is sovereign over our dreams and subconscious, just as he is sovereign over the workings of our eyes, ears, and noses.

2. *Ibid.*, 1050–55. Important texts in this discussion are Acts 21:4, 10–11; 1 Corinthians 14:29–38; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–21.