

verb used by Agabus in 21:11, *paradidomi*, denotes the voluntary, conscious, deliberate giving over or handing over of something to someone else, but the Jews did not voluntarily hand Paul over to the Romans. The prediction was broadly true, but it included inaccuracies of detail that would have called into question the authenticity of any OT prophet.

3. 1 *Thessalonians* 5:19-21. Paul tells the Thessalonians, 'do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good' (1 *Thess.* 5:20-21). If the Thessalonians had thought that prophecy equaled God's word in authority, Paul would never have had to tell them not to despise it; they 'received' and 'accepted' God's word 'with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit' (1 *Thess.* 1:6; 2:13; cf. 4:15). But when Paul tells them to 'test everything', he implies that prophecies contain some things that are good and some things that are not good. This could never have been said of the words of an OT prophet, or of the authoritative teachings of a NT apostle.

4. 1 *Corinthians* 14:29-38. More extensive evidence on NT prophecy is found in 1 *Corinthians* 14. When Paul says, 'Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said' (1 *Cor.* 14:29), he suggests that they should listen carefully and sit the good from the bad, accepting some and rejecting the rest (this is the implication of the Greek word *diakrino*, here translated 'weigh what is said'). An OT prophet like Isaiah would hardly have said, 'Listen to what I say and weigh what is said; sort the good from the bad, what you should accept from what you should not'. If the prophecy had absolute divine authority, it would be sin to do this. But here Paul commands that it be done, thus implying that NT prophecy did not have the authority of God's very words.

Paul implies also that no one at Corinth, a church in which there was much prophecy, was able to speak God's very words. He says in 1 *Corinthians* 14:36, 'What! Did the word of God come forth from you, or are you the only ones it has reached?' (author's translation).

All these passages indicate that the common idea that prophets spoke 'words of the Lord' when the apostles were not present

and he had to be rescued by force (v. 32). The delivering him voluntarily, tried to kill him (v. 33; also 22:29), and the Jews, rather than quiet; the Romans, not the Jews, bound Paul and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles, a prediction that was nearly correct but not equal to that of Scripture.

2. *Acts* 21:10-11. Agabus prophesied that the Jews at Jerusalem would bind Paul and 'carry the same authority/power as Scripture.

1. *Acts* 21:4. In *Acts* 21:4, we read of the disciples at Tyre: 'Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.' This seems to be a reference to prophecy directed towards Paul, but Paul disobeyed it. He surely would not have done this if the prophecy had been equal to that of Scripture.

There are indications in the NT that 'prophecy' among ordinary Christians did not carry the same authority/power as Scripture.

### *The gift of prophecy to ordinary Christians*

minds (see discussion below).

something that God had brought to their divine authority, but simply to report Christians who spoke not with absolute more commonly with reference to ordinary the words 'prophet' and 'prophecy' are used churches in NT times. In other NT passages, ordinary Christians in hundreds of local rest of the church, *i.e.* in thousands of functioned not in the 'foundation', but in the relevance to the gift of prophecy as it However, these verses have no direct inclusion of Gentiles in the church (3:5). received the special revelation concerning the also a limited group of prophets) who of a unique group of apostles (and perhaps 2:20 and 3:5 speak of the 'foundational' role apostles functioning as 'prophets', Ephesians authority equal to Paul's. With respect to the implied that all 'teachers' in NT times had calling himself a 'teacher' (2 *Tim.* 1:11) had divine authority, any more than Paul's themselves imply that their speech or writing nor did the terms 'prophet' and 'prophecy' in terminology ordinarily used for the apostles, 22:7; Eph. 2:20; 3:5). But this was not the was the basis of what they said (Rev. 1:3; that a special revelation from the Holy Spirit they were giving a 'prophecy', emphasizing were sometimes used of the apostles when Of course, the words 'prophet' and 'prophecy' *The apostles as 'prophets'*