

“The Drumbeat of Heaven” – Part 2

Lesson 2: Prophetic worship

God is releasing a new sound in the earth at this time, a powerful, passionate, prophetic sound, filled with His love, His fire and His desire for His Bride, the church to come into the fullness of her inheritance in God.

Around the world, in different nations, this sound is being heard and the church is responding to it, but still the Lord is calling for us to come closer to Him and hear the new sounds that He wants to release into the nations at this time.

These sounds are His heartbeat, His voice, His breath and His very thoughts.

In order for us to understand this call from God, we need to understand exactly what prophecy is and how it connects with music, so that the prophetic voice of God can be released through our worship.

Over the next few lessons, I will be laying a foundation for releasing the prophetic voice of God through our drumming and how to link prophetic worship with intercession during our times of drumming.

An introduction to prophetic worship

So, what is prophecy?

The Hebrew word for prophecy is *naba*, which means to speak under inspiration in prediction or simple discourse. Discourse, by definition, is a communication of ideas or information by way of conversation, to include speech, song, writing or music.

Our God is a communicating God and He wants to communicate with us. In fact, He specifically created us with spiritual as well as physical ears to hear His voice and eyes to see those things that He wants to show us.

*“Ears that hear and eyes that see—
the LORD has made them both.” (Proverbs 20: 12)*

As we fix our gaze upon Jesus (*Hebrews 12: 2*), becoming quiet in His presence, and sharing with Him what is on our hearts, we find that two-way dialogue begins to flow. Spontaneous thoughts flow from the throne of God to our spiritual ears, and we find that we are actually conversing with the King of Kings.

God chose us to have fellowship with Him before the world was even formed. We need to walk in the understanding that God loves us and the very reason for our existence is to fellowship with God.

*“For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love He^[a] predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will”
(Ephesians 1: 4-5)*

Any successful and loving relationship must by its very nature be one of two-way communication. It is God’s desire for us to communicate with Him and to hear His voice in whatever way He chooses to speak to us.

God longs for an intimate relationship with each one of us; He is interested in everything we do. God is not, nor has He ever been, an absentee father. He will always be available for us.

God wants us to understand why we were created. His plan for mankind was never to create and abandon us. He is a loving Father - one who desires to share His plans and purposes with us so that we will be fully prepared and fully equipped to fulfil our destiny. He never created us to wander around aimlessly through life.

Prophecy is an outflowing of growing closer to God and developing a relationship of intimacy with Him. Prophecy is one of the ways in which God speaks to us today. The apostle Paul said that we should all covet (earnestly desire) prophecy, and this includes prophesying through our musical instruments:

*“Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy...”
1 Corinthians 14:39a.*

Prophecy is that which brings edification, exhortation and comfort to people through the spoken, written, sung or even played words of God to Christians and unbelievers.

Prophecy is one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, given by God to the Church for its edification (to build up), exhortation (to stir up) & comfort (to cheer up).

Although prophecy is often used by God to speak concerning actual events, past, present and future, this is not its primary purpose. Prophecy is all about communion or communication between God and man.

It is vital for us to remember that God is far more ready to speak to us than we are ready to listen to Him when He does.

The best place for us to start looking at prophecy is the cross of Jesus Christ. What does the cross say to you? To me it speaks of love and communion between God and man, and between all men.

Look at the cross, and you see a vertical connection between God and man - God made a way through Jesus for all men to come back into an intimate relationship of love with Him. You also see a horizontal connection, which speaks of the love and fellowship that should exist between every man, through Jesus Christ.

At the centre of the cross is Jesus Himself, and at the farthest points of the vertical and horizontal connections. It is Jesus alone who connects God with man and men with each other through His love and sacrificial death.

At times, we may be tempted to think that when God speaks to us, He will have a go at us because of some way that we feel we have failed God, or we may think that God doesn't want to speak to us. We may even think that God doesn't love us, and so we are afraid to speak to Him.

One of the devil's main tactics against the Christian soldier is to stop him or her from communicating with headquarters. If we try to go on with our Christian life without taking time to regularly communicate with God, we will find it impossible to make progress. When we are not making progress, we are actually falling backwards.

As prophetic drummers, we are called to lead forth the army of God in worship (the highest form of warfare) and intercession.

Prophecy is primary to reveal the heart, mind, nature and especially the love of God towards His people, and also to those who do not yet know Him.

We must just understand that it is God who is speaking to us through a fallible human vessel, and as such the prophecy needs to be tested.

God speaks to us in a vast number of diverse ways, from His Word, through prophetic utterance, through prophetic song, through dance, through music, through actions and even through creation itself.

As we are made in the image of God, one of the attributes of His divine nature that we are called to manifest is His creativity.

We are called to be creative in our prayer and intercession, in our praise and worship, in our dance and actions, in our teaching and preaching, and in our prophetic ministry.

Too often, we limit God by our own understanding of what He can or cannot do, but God is eternally creative, His nature has not, does not and will not change, and He wants us as His Bride to be the reflection of His divine nature on the earth.

If we have a true understanding of the prophetic nature of God, then we will by nature be creative, as prophecy is communication from God to His people and to those who do not know Him of God's heart, mind, character and above all, His love.

Prophecy therefore, is meant to be creative and take on many forms, as God Himself is not limited by only those methods of communication that we may use ourselves. He will communicate with us in whatever way He chooses, and we need to give Him the freedom to do so.

What is prophetic praise and worship?

Whenever the term 'prophetic' is mentioned in relation to music and worship, be assured that it means different things to different people. The definitions range from personal prewritten songs of edification to church-wide exhortations with spontaneous flare.

I believe that prophetic praise and worship is praise and worship that is sustained, not by the effort of people, but by the reality of God's presence. I believe that God has things that he wants to do in times of worship and that it's a relevant question to ask God what he wants to do in the congregation and/or in our individual lives in times of worship.

Prophetic worship is worship that is fresh and new. As we spend time in God's presence, He speaks either to us individually or He will speak through somebody to the rest of the people.

Isaiah 43:18-19

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing. Now it springs up, do you not perceive it?"

The purpose in God is to progress continually. Worship is not a formality. It's not a preliminary activity to warm us up for the preaching but worship is central to our reason for existence.

As prophetic drummers, we are called to lead forth the army of God in worship (the highest form of warfare) and intercession. Let us be willing and open before God for Him to speak both to us and through us as we play, expressing the love and character of God through our own unique styles.

Prophetic Musicians

What is the role of the musician in prophetic worship? To answer this, let's take a look at the following verse of Scripture:

'Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the skilled men performing their service was...' (1 Chronicles 25: 1).

If the sound of an instrument reaches your ears and the musician is playing the music God is giving him, then He is indeed prophesying with His instrument. Clearly the above verse says that it can be done.

Moreover, it says the musicians were set apart to do just that! The Word of God says that we can prophesy on our instruments, and so we can.

The secular world knows how to use music to influence us. Listen to the background music in a movie and consider what is being played and how it relates to the scenes you are viewing. Do this with commercials.

What about the church that puts on worship music while ministry is taking place? Music goes straight to the spirit. You cannot intercept it because there are no words for the rational mind to capture and process.

If the musician (sold out for God) hears from God, interprets that musically and plays it and you listen, God is literally speaking directly to your spirit through a living vessel.

In the realm of the spirit, God uses music to prepare the heart for His word.

"...The first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here'" (Revelation 4: 1)

"I heard...a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, 'I am the Alpha and Omega..." (Revelation 1: 10-11)

Prophesying Using Musical Instruments

All of us have been deeply moved at some time by a piece of music, whether it is a church chorus, a hymn, a rock song or an operatic theme.

Why is it that music moves us so deeply?

Firstly, we need to understand that our God is very musical. He enjoyed the musical worship from His angelic hosts (including Lucifer) in the eternity before man was created. Even now the angels worship God with wonderful creativity and musical fervour.

When God created man, He made him in His own image, and just as creativity is an aspect of God that man has been given, so is musical appreciation and expression.

2 Kings 3:15 says, "But now bring me a musician.' Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."

From this scripture and from many others we can clearly see that God's presence can be made manifest through musical expression.

As we have already discussed, prophecy is communication from God's heart and mind to His people and to those who don't know Him. Prophecy comes in many forms and varieties, including musical expression.

It is during these times of anointed musicianship that God often communicates to His people. Unfortunately, this communication is often missed due to the lack of understanding that God can communicate in such a way and also due to the lack of willing interpreters.*

If we understand that all musical expression comes from the spiritual realm, as it comes from the inner man of the person producing it, then we will also be able to understand that God is capable of communicating with us in such a way.

** Remember that prophetic music needs to be interpreted, or all that most people will be aware of will be anointed music.*

Music and the Prophetic

In the Word of God, there is a close association between music and prophecy. When King Jehoshaphat of Judah was seeking direction from God regarding victory over the armies of Ammon, Moab and Mt Seir, it was through a musician which God spoke that direction. There was a prophetic mantle on him as he worshipped the Lord.

Throughout the bible there is a close relationship between music and the prophetic.

Many of the *Psalms* are considered to be prophetic. And that book is a collection of songs written during a long period of time extending from the time of Moses to the post-exile era of the second temple.

David being a musician himself knew the place the ministry of music should have in the house of the Lord. He set aside whole families to be musicians before the Ark of the Covenant. Their job was to prophesy on those instruments.

"Moreover David and the captain of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman and of Jeduthum, who should prophesy with Harps, with Psalteries, and with Cymbals." (1 Chronicles 25: 1)

These musicians did not only accompany the choir or congregational singing. They were part of the prophetic ministry in the church. They prophesied on their instruments. The instruments as well as the musician ministered the prophetic message. The total number of musicians that David appointed to prophesy with instruments of music was 288, which is a definite sign of the importance of prophetic musicianship (*1 Chronicles 25:7*).

“..... under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with the Harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord.” (1 Chronicles 25:3)

There are several accounts in the Word of God connecting music and prophecy. In the book of Samuel the story is related how Samuel anointed Saul and kissed him and then told Saul what was going to happen to him after he left.

“As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets, coming down from the high place with Lyres, Tambourines, Flutes and Harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power and you will prophesy with them, and you will be changed into a different person.” (1 Samuel 10: 5,6)

In the book of 2 Kings, we read of another prophet who had music played before he prophesied.

“But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass when the Minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him (Elisha). And he said, “Thus saith the Lord...” (2 Kings 3: 15, 16a)

Prophetic Drumming

So, how do we as drummers and percussionists play prophetically? How do we play the thoughts and words of God through our drum kits, djembes, bodhrans, doumbeks, congas and timbales?

The answer is that as we draw closer to God and learn to hear His voice with greater clarity, in the same way as we ask Him to teach us how to pray, we also ask Him how to prophesy through our drums and percussion.

An attitude of openness to God, coupled with an ear that is tuned into Him will enable us to play prophetically. This is something that you will grow into and something that will release the anointing and presence of God for healing, deliverance and transformation as we trust Him and play what He wants played, as we release His heartbeat, His thoughts and His character through our playing.

Practise restraint, sensitivity and humility through your playing and know that God loves those grooves that you play as you seek to fulfil your calling. If we can be prepared with a good knowledge of our instrument combined with skill in playing it, we can be ready to convey our heart of worship through the meaning in the songs and also convey God's heart to others.

I would like to include an article by Asher Mains (included here with Asher's kind permission), which is in the form of a series of Q & A s, which I think will encourage you. (Asher Mains (ashermains@gmail.com) is from Grenada, where he is a member of the Anse Berean Bible Church. He wrote the article from Ghana, where he spent the fall semester on a study abroad program. He

is the founder and leader of Sankofa, an African drumming group at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan).

Q. Because drum kits (as in the rock tradition) are so often seen and used in worship, many people assume that they are the only way to include drumming and percussion in worship. But aren't hand percussion instruments as used in the African tradition—djembe, other smaller hand drums, and even tambourines—more useful?

A. While drum kits have their merit, I agree that hand percussion can offer a warmer, more personable alternative for rhythm in worship. Hand percussion is more responsive to the touch of the musician because it is skin touching skin as opposed to wood touching plastic. Sound can be more easily manipulated with the hands, once the right technique is learned. Also, if a church is afraid of its worship sounding too much like “rock” or secular music, hand drums are a good way of providing energy-filled rhythm without the sound that is associated with mainstream music.

Q. How do you use drums with the reading of Scripture?

A. Drumming with the reading of Scripture provides a fresh sound-scape that enables listeners to connect with the text in a new way. I have found, especially in youth ministry, that Scripture reading can become tedious because it's hard to keep track of the different voices or tones of the reading. Percussion is a fairly simple method of giving audible cues during the reading of Scripture. Changing the voicing of the drum can indicate a change in character or mood. I generally use higher tones and faster rhythm to indicate happiness and more bass tones to indicate sorrow or even power. The possibilities for exhibiting emotion audibly are endless, and they may vary from culture to culture or even congregation to congregation. Because there is no fixed or established convention, there is freedom to experiment and make a particular technique your own. To hear an example, listen online to Isaiah 60 accompanied by Sankofa, a drumming group at Calvin College (www.reformedworship.org; click on Classic Content; RW 73; “Arise, Shine!”).

Q. Do some texts work better with drums than others?

A. The only texts that might be difficult to drum to would be texts that are difficult to read in any kind of setting. There is a lot of potential for expression within the psalms, narratives, and New Testament teachings. Where there is more than one person talking, you can change the sound of the drum by where you hit it to give the impression of more than one speaker. When I come to lists of things, I give rhythmic pauses so that each of the items in the list can be heard and understood. The rhythm can change when the mood changes, from happy to sad or from commanding to listening. You'll want to read the text carefully beforehand and make interpretive decisions about how to accompany it. Ask yourself questions to understand it better and look for themes. *

** Steve – this is very evident in the “Harp and Bowl” model of worship, which I will teach on in later lessons.*

Q. What should a drummer who is accompanying other musicians and singers do or not do?

A. The important thing to remember is that accompanying means supporting someone else in what he or she is doing. Drummers need to be aware of their volume level as well as how much of the sound-scape they are occupying. A constant rumble from the drums is usually not as effective as pulling back sometimes and coming in at other times. Less is more. Musicians or singers should be in a place where they can make eye contact with the drummer to communicate nonverbally.

Q. How do you make multiple percussion instruments sound good together? Having two or more just sounds like a bunch of noise to me!

A. From the drumming tradition I come from, there are three-plus parts: a bass drum, a rhythm drum, and a master drum. The bass drum provides a point of reference for the other percussionists—it plays the absolute basic version of the rhythm. This rhythm can be as simple as hitting the 1st and the 3rd beat in a 4/4 rhythm. The rhythm drum keeps the “meat” or the main portion of the rhythm going. The master drummer provides variations, while staying within the rhythm. It takes an intuitive drummer to provide those “interesting” rhythmic moments. Thinking in terms of basic, rhythmic, and interesting can help you transfer that idea to other percussion instruments. For instance, claves or a bell can keep the basic rhythm while a tambourine keeps the rhythm; a drum or even clapping can provide the variations to the rhythm. If you have multiple drums, keep in mind that more than one person can play the same part.

Q. Who can be involved? Is this option for worship inclusive of different age groups?

A. One of the most exciting things about using drums or percussion in worship services is that anyone who’s interested can participate. Drums are unique in that getting started is easy! I have seen drummers as young as 4 years old keeping the beat, and there is no age limit. In traditional societies, drumming has been a male-dominated profession, but that is changing. Drumming can also allow people from different cultures to connect on a rhythmic level. Because drumming is an attractive instrument to many people, it can be used as part of an outreach ministry and so provide a way of worshiping for people who have not grown up in the church. Drumming can also be used to include people with disabilities. I have seen drum groups made entirely of deaf students, who can feel and thus follow the rhythm. I have seen people with other disabilities take great joy in being able to contribute in their own way. In short, drumming can be intergenerational, multicultural, gender-inclusive, and accommodating to people with disabilities. *

** Steve – As I have taught worship and facilitated drum circles in different countries and cultures, I have found this to be very true – there is a very unifying aspect to drumming in a group, and almost everybody can be a part of this.*

Q. How do we start using hand drums and/or percussion instruments in our church?

A. I suggest you start by bringing it up with church officials and getting feedback from the congregation. Once they are on board, start by getting a couple of instruments like a djembe or a cajon and maybe some shakers. Ease people into it by using them along with congregational singing. You may want to invite a group who does this sort of thing in worship to come and demonstrate how it's done. Try some of these things in a youth group or Sunday school setting to get a feel for how it will be received and to fine-tune your approach. After you have established drumming as a viable worship option, try reading Scripture accompanied with drumming. Be creative—you can also use rhythm with prayer, during the offertory, benediction, gathering, and so on. In addition to using drums in your worship, consider offering drumming classes or performances at community events to reach out to the surrounding community. *

** Steve – this is an excellent form of evangelism, as I have found that most people enjoy this type of spontaneous music, and it can often open up doors to speak to people.*

How to discern the anointing and follow the Holy Spirit

Although a lot of this is learned through experience, there are certain ways to discern the anointing and follow the Holy Spirit's guidance during times of worship, and some of these are -

- 1.) The voice of the Holy Spirit - God may speak to us with His "inner voice" and let us know the direction in which He wants the worship and/or intercession to follow.
- 2.) A particular scripture may come to mind that points the worship and/or intercession in a particular direction, such as *2 Chronicles 7: 14* for identificational repentance.
- 3.) It may be obvious from prophetic words that have come during the worship time that the Holy Spirit is leading in a particular direction, for example along the lines of inner healing.
- 4.) At times we may feel God's emotions during worship, such as joy over His people or sorrow over those who don't Him and this will help us to discern the direction that God wants us to go in.

Remember to lead the congregation during prophetic worship

One thing that is vital to remember during times of prophetic worship is that as musicians, singers and worship leaders we need to lead the congregation into God's presence and not just go there ourselves and leave them behind. Of course, it is our own individual responsibility to enter God's presence and worship Him for ourselves, but we also have a responsibility for those we are leading.

As we are seeking to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in what we are doing, we need to make sure that this is communicated to the congregation and that encouragement is given to those that are following.

We must learn to follow God in the music as it is VERY easy to just get carried away with what is happening when God's anointing starts flowing, but we must always follow God. If God says keep it simple, we keep it simple, if He says keep it fast and complex, we keep it fast and complex. We must remember that music opens spiritual doors and so we must follow God where He is leading us.

It is also an important thing to remember that not everybody will be comfortable with following the Holy Spirit in worship and intercession, especially if He begins to move in such a way that "comfort zones" are left behind! So, be aware that we are responsible for leading the congregation, but also that not all of the congregation will follow!

Intimacy with God must be our ultimate goal!

"And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." (Isaiah 62: 5b)

We know that Jesus is returning for His Bride, and we understand from the signs taking place around us and from the season that we live in, that His return is approaching quickly. However, do we really have experiential knowledge of our calling as the Bride of Christ and His courtship, or is it simply head knowledge?

Our ultimate reason for being here at all is to worship God and to have a loving, intimate and genuine relationship with Him. When we finally get to heaven, we will be continually worshipping God and have intimacy with Him that goes beyond anything we have ever experienced, but this does not mean that we are incapable of experiencing a true depth of intimacy with God here and now.

It is God's heart for us that we enter further and deeper into the Glory realm of God, both in our times of worship and intercession and also in our daily lives.

Becoming the Bride that Jesus is looking forward to marrying only comes by us being transformed into His image. Jesus is the Bridegroom – the Lamb

without spot or blemish, and only by becoming like Him will we also be made perfect, and be ready as a Bride prepared for her Bridegroom.

If we don't spend time with God, how will we know Him? How can we be intimate with someone we don't know? The truth is we can't!

As we choose to spend time with God and develop a two-way relationship with Him, we get to know Him intimately. The more we know Him, the more we will long to be in His presence and the more like Him we will become.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17

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