

GNITN

#314

Why Prophecy Is Important

Prophecy Makes Up A Lot Of The Bible

According to some, prophecy makes up one third of the Bible. And yet the topic is ignored or rejected by so many people. And I might add that for those who do believe that prophecy is still valuable for the life of the believer, they limit how it can be used. They espouse that only the prophetic words in the Bible should be taught and followed and anyone who says they speak for the Lord now is misleading the Body of Christ or worse, they should be stoned. I know, pretty harsh, right? Rather than relegate what to us represents the unknown, we should allow God to speak not only to our past and our present, but also to our future, remembering that a great deal of believers both in the Old and New Testaments were given glimpses into that unknown. To them, what is now fulfilled prophecy to us was in fact God's love for them as He unveiled the upcoming events to show them His love. These glimpses into what was ahead of them would prepare the wise how to live their lives and in most cases even saved their lives. And, of course, it was also meant to prepare people who weren't even born to have hope that God would be there for them at the appointed time.

Reasons For Doubt

Satan understands that if a Christian is unprepared for what is yet to come they can be hurt needlessly and since his modus operandi is to steal, kill, and destroy any damage he can inflict is just fine with him. The devil uses deception by making all talk of the future to be more fantasy than reality and then points to false prophets, both spiritual and unspiritual, Biblical or not to make such talk to be not just bad, but weird. Just look at what people say about us as Pentecostals as they see people who babble incoherently, then see people say they understood it. And then we talk about how God speaks to us in visions and dreams where we can foretell the future or know things about other people so we can tell them what God wants them to know. Many see us as one step away from the looney bin especially when we say this is normal and we see this happen all the time. But it is easy to be critical of what one doesn't understand and even more critical when, like Pharaoh's magicians they think they can replicate the exact thing without all the God overtones.

But We Are Serious

There will always be doubters and critics of the supernatural element of Christianity just as there have been since the beginning of time. Skeptics come in all shapes and sizes, from Christians who either don't believe in the supernatural or think miracles, signs and wonders and all things to do with the Holy Spirit and His baptism are no longer needed. However, even the staunchest of doubters scratch their heads when something they can't explain happens to someone they know or to them and, although they may still have questions, now they have an experience to deal with and that complicates things. And the accuser of the brethren will always point to bad examples of prophecy to tarnish the good ones. He has a whole bevy of the fake like fortune tellers and psychics who prey on the gullible and he laughs with glee when they are exposed. He then lumps the true gift of prophecy in with these charlatans to discredit God's true prophets and to devalue listening to God as odd and even unscriptural. Relegating prophecy and prophets to

not only unneeded, but even unwanted ministries in the Body of Christ is just the kind of thinking he relishes as there is great good to be found in them.

Enough About Doubters

Let's focus on the Church world and those who actually read their Bibles. Even in this community there are skeptics and unbelievers when just a cursory skimming of the Bible turns up all sorts of things that can't be explained by human science. Well, if such scientists are not intellectually honest, they will miss it. But many of the greatest scientists in history have noted they can't explain the things we see in Pentecostal circles and definitely are baffled by fulfilled prophecy when there is no explanation for how these men could know things about events hundreds and even thousands of years before they happened.

God Speaking To Us

Prophecy is literally God speaking to us. Yes, that is really what this means and somehow, we have made this into something rare and only during church services when it should be as normal as breathing to Christians. It should be that way, but for some reason our expectations have changed over time. And Jesus not only expects prophets and prophecy to be given attention, but He even put it in the five most important functions of the church right along with apostles, pastors, teachers, and evangelists (See *Eph 4:11*). But is the office of the prophet as vital as the role of Pastor?

Let's Define Our Terms

The role of the prophet is two-fold: 1) to receive the divine message and 2) to deliver that message faithfully. Since the original texts were written in Hebrew and Greek it is a good thing to see just what words are used for prophet. In the Hebrew, the two roles are summed up in the three words used for the word "prophet." The words *chozeh* and *ro'eh* encapsulate the prophet's role of grasping God's message as revealed to them. These words are commonly translated as "seer" or as one who sees what God wants to do or say. But the most frequently used word in the Old Testament is the word *nabi* which describes as they convey their message through speech or in writing or other forms.

Two In One

(In those days if people wanted a message from God, they would say, "Let's go and ask the seer," for prophets used to be called seers.) (1 Sam 9:9, NLT)

In this verse two words for "prophet" are seen. The word for "seer" is *ro'eh* and the word for "prophet" is *rabi* so they are both in this verse. The other word is *chozeh* which is from the Hebrew root word for "vision" emphasizes that the prophet receives messages through divinely initiated visions. It is the same word used in *Proverbs 29:18*:

Where there is no vision [no revelation of God and His word], the people are unrestrained (AMP)

So, you can see the importance of prophecy from these verses themselves in people and even nations. And one can see these words underscore the role of the prophet as the human side of God's ongoing divine communication.

The Prophetic Flow

When we push prophecy to the sidelines or even discard it or call it evil, we miss so much good that it and those that flow in it are meant to do for the Body of Christ.

As mentioned earlier, it is odd that such an influential gift and role is not seen as prominently in churches now, which in my opinion is sad since we live in a cacophony of false prophets that grow in numbers by the day and the Body of Christ surely needs a stronger voice of prophets and prophecy to offset these prophets of Baal. So why don't we see an increased role of the prophet? Too many, the CEO-style leadership along with structure and programming has squeezed out the Spirit. It is seen in one of the epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians:

Do not quench (suppress or subdue) the [Holy] Spirit; 20 Do not spurn the gifts and utterances of the prophets [do not depreciate prophetic revelations nor despise inspired instruction or exhortation or warning]. 21 But test and prove all things [until you can recognize] what is good; [to that] hold fast. (1 Thess 5:19-21, AMPC)

This is the context of believers who thought that the Rapture had already occurred even after Paul told them definitely the conditions of when it would happen in person. And it appears that God was trying to assure them through prophecies which they treated with contempt. The Greek word for "contempt is ἐξουθενέω or *exoutheneó* (ex-oo-then-eh'-o) which can mean *cast out as nothing; set at nought; to count as nothing, to treat with utter contempt, i.e., as zero; set at nought, despise utterly, to regard something as lacking any standing (value).*

God Doesn't Want To Be Silent

The lack of prophetic direction leaves churches to plan and grow with designs and controls of human will. Instead of a fresh and vibrant interaction with the Holy Spirit we left with people wholly thinking they can do it all on their own. Such an attitude and routine only allow for seeking His vision when we are in a pinch rather than a constant partnership with God in all things on a daily basis. It is disappointing when this happens and often causes things started in the Spirit to end in the flesh. I could give you countless examples of this as moves of God which were birthed in the flames of revival now wallow in the sea of human leading and interpretation, letting the waves and even tsunamis of a fallen culture dictating their every move.

He Longs To Be Intimately Involved

In their book *Keys To The Apostolic And Prophetic*, authors Joseph S. Girdler and Carolyn Tennant put it this way:

The prophetic should be more than an oral message spoken occasionally in a Sunday morning service. That is the operation of one of the gifts of the Spirit but pouring forth of this stream is meant to be more pervasive, robust, and applicable to numerous situations. The full work of the prophetic is designed to occur at many times throughout the week and to be an integral part of the life of the church. Any gathering of the Body of Christ for meetings, teaching, worship, or anything at all, really is an opportunity for God to be present to speak and to guide.

Recall that God sent the prophet Nathan to confront King David (see **1 Sam 12**) and repentance was the order of the day in the palace. Not only was a right life restored, but it was through the use of a prophet of God moving in the gift of prophecy. The church needs prophets and the gift of prophecy now more than ever as we see men and women of God falling away more and more and I believe it is because we don't support or respect and encourage more Nathans, Samuels and

Elijahs. It is exactly what happens when we despise prophecies and the prophets who give them. Let us go back to that scripture in ***Proverbs*** and put it in context:

When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. (Prov 28:18, NLT)

It is the Church that must repent of not providing an environment where prophets and prophecy is encouraged. We pray that this happens sooner than later.