

45. The Spirit of Prophecy

“It is opposed to the nature of God to force men to believe. He hides Himself in history, as well as in nature, that He may be found of them that seek Him. And thus in the prophecies also, there was sufficient clearness for those whose hearts were prepared to be able to discover whatever was essential and important to themselves, and everything that related to the salvation of their souls; and on the other hand, so much obscurity that those who did not desire the truth, might not be forcibly constrained to see it. It would be just as reasonable to demand that God should work miracles every day for the purpose of convincing those that despise His name of the folly of their conduct, as to require that there should be greater clearness in the prophecies. . . . If the prophecies had possessed the clearness of history, their fulfillment would have been rendered impossible.”-E. W. Hengstenberg, in “Christology of the Old Testament,” 2d ed., Vol. IV, page 442.

“Prophecy is a miracle of knowledge, a declaration, or description, or representation of something future, beyond the power of human sagacity to discern or to calculate, and it is the highest evidence that can be given of supernatural communion with the Deity, and of the truth of a revelation from God.”-T. H. Horne, in “An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures,” 1841 edition, Vol. I, page 119.

SELECTED REFERENCES

PK 21, 22; PP 366, 367; [1] Pages 26-41; [3] Pages 167-175.

Memorize: Hosea 12:13.

A. THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE LEADERSHIP.

Job 33:14-18; Amos 3:3, 6-8; Proverbs 29:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

“God has ever been the leader of His people. Since the beginning of the world, He has had direct charge of His work. There has been no time when He has delegated His power to another, yet He has used human instruments to carry out His wishes, and to convey to the people His will. That He has personally been leading in His work is clear from the word of God.”-F. C. Gilbert, in “Divine Predictions,” page 13.

“The exodus movement of ancient times was led by the living God. The movement had an individuality about it. Repeatedly the Scripture speaks of it as having been ‘brought forth.’ It is the same phrase that is used of the birth of a child. When the hour of prophecy foretold to Abraham came, the exodus movement was ‘brought forth,’ born from heaven. . . . It was an evidence to all peoples that there is a living God who does things on earth. It was not done in a corner, this manifestation of divine leadership. The influence of the work was world wide. . . . Not least among all the tokens of the presence of the true and living God in the exodus movement, was the means ordained by Him by which to guide and direct it. It was to be a movement under divine leadership. . . . In order to speak to the people and to lead them, He placed in the movement the gift of the Spirit of prophecy. He called Moses as a prophet to speak messages to His ancient church of the exodus, ‘the church in the wilderness,’ as Stephen called it. Acts 7:38.”-W. A. Spicer, in “Certainties of the Advent Movement,” pages 181-183.

B. THE AGENCY OF DIVINE COUNSEL.

Hosea 12:13, 10; Psalm 77:20; Micah 6:4; Isaiah 63:9-12; 2 Chronicles 20:20, last part.

“A ‘prophet’ in modern popular usage means predominantly one who foretells the future—who predicts events which could be only known to him by miraculous revelation. . . . The definite announcement of events yet distant is but a small, a subordinate, and an unessential part of the prophet’s mission. Elijah was a great prophet, yet he uttered no prediction which did not concern the immediate present, unless his announcements of the drought and of the destiny of Ahab and Jezebel be reckoned as predictions; on the other hand, neither Samuel nor John the Baptist, though among the greatest of the prophets, foretold the distant future. . . . The prophets were no mere augurs or monthly prognosticators. The work for which they were called was nobler and more divine; and when that work was sketched out to them in the hour of their call, the power of definite prediction is not dwelt upon. They were statesmen, they were moral teachers, they were spiritual guides.” - F. W. Farrar, in “The Minor Prophets,” pages 3,4.

“In all their deepest announcements they could say, with an almost oppressive consciousness of

responsibility, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.’ . . . The prophets rightly felt themselves to be the special and divinely appointed warners and teachers of their people.”-Id., pages 8, 9.

C. PROPHETS WERE EVIDENT IN EVERY CRISIS.

**Noah (Genesis 6:9, 13, 17); Moses (Exodus 3:4, 5, 11, 12; 4:10.16; Dent. 34:10.12);
Elijah (1 Kings 17:1; 18:20.22, 37.41; 2 Kings 2:11, 13); John the Baptist (Mark 1:23; Luke 7:28).**

D. A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE PROPHETS.

The Lord has never left His people to wander about at the mercy of every wind of doctrine, every new and novel invention of Satan to enthrall them, but has in every fresh attack provided from His wisdom the specific instruction needed to meet it. This is both evident and reasonable. No people who choose to serve the living God would cope with the superhuman cunning of the enemy, and remain true, without divine interposition. This is especially true today, and God has provided for it; but let us see how God, “who changes not,” has always led and communicated with His own.

a. Adam and Eve talked with their Creator, their Parent, face to face, even as the “sons of God” had, when called together in the heavenly councils. Job 1:6; 2:1. Sin made the shameful separation (Isaiah 59:2) which obscured such direct converse. Through the mediation of Christ, God still speaks to man by the “still small voice” of the Holy Spirit. Enoch “walked with God” until veiled conversation gave place to the blessed face-to-face communion, at his translation to the home of God. Noah also “walked with God,” enabling him to receive a message of warning for the world, and was instructed in the details of manual labor, enabling him to build a huge lifeboat for the saving of his house. “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Giving close attention to divine direction as to the minutiae of the church organization and conduct, we shall be held through the storm and shall bring salvation to all within its doors.

b. Abraham, the obedient “father of the faithful,” was called, lived, and journeyed as “seeing Him who is invisible.” being directed in all he undertook. Angel prophets brought him testimonies which he heeded, and delivered Lot from the fire of Sodom. Likewise, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were in close touch with angels in dreams and in visions, and were instructed by them.

c. Moses, “whom the Lord knew face to face,” heard the voice at the burning bush, and ever after recognized and understood its clear instruction. He received a message of warning for Pharaoh and his people. BY this same gift Israel was delivered and led in all the wilderness wanderings. Through the prophet Moses, God instructed Israel in law, strategy, morals, sanitation, diet, literature, architecture, organization, and government. From the solitude upon the mountaintops of Sinai and Pisgah, he talked with God.

d. Joshua, the mighty man of valor, was directed in the conquests and division of the Promised Land, being successful or failing as the people heeded the divine instructions of their heavenly Leader. Lesser judge-prophets followed at times of crisis, Othniel (Judges 3:9), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Jephthah (Judges 10:12), Samson (Judges 13:25), each powerful only when in the path of Heaven’s commands.

e. Then followed Eli and Samuel, priest-prophets, teachers, and expounders of doctrine. Saul, the first king-prophet, prospered with his people while in his early humble uprightness, but sadly fell in adapting the testimony to his own liking. The Spirit of God left him, and he died in an attempt to regain his lost power and influence over the people. David, in contrast, followed, showing the world that every victory, every triumph, was of God. He ruled by the direction of the Spirit of prophecy, and wrote voluminously of deeply spiritual themes. Obedience, repentance, confession, prayer) and praise fill his psalms. Solomon began as Saul had, in humility, and was thus used until pride proved his ruin and that of his people. While humility reigned in his heart, the Spirit of prophecy gave the world through him three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs. 1 Kings 4:32.

f. By apostasy and disobedience Israel forfeited the right, yes .indeed, were shut off from the avenue, of the Spirit’s guiding voice, arid brought upon themselves a great crisis. Here God intervened, calling the prophet Elijah, for the sake of His name and the few scattered ones unknown, unrecognized, but still true to Jehovah worship in the midst of the popular crowd who worshiped Baal, the sun god. Through Elijah, by mighty reproofs and miracles of fire, God brought about a reformation and called out a loyal, commandment-keeping people. They were organized, schools were established, and the law was taught to the people in its fullness. Bible, history, and industry were taught in the schools. Elijah, like Enoch, was translated, they being the only two men ever saved from the world without seeing death. Elisha continued

in the prophetic office, going from the farm to teaching, healing, warning, and comforting God's people. Then followed a series of special crisis prophets, with their brief testimonies -Hanani (2 Chronicles 16:7-10), Jehu (2 Chronicles 19:2-40), Jahaziel (2 Chronicles 20:14-18), and Joel (Joel 2).

g. To call God's people from formalism to a spiritual experience Judah was granted the first major prophet, Isaiah, the great Prophet of the gospel of Christ. (See Isaiah 1:11-20.) His opening vision of heaven called him to consecration and to the prophetic office. His entreaties to Judah, his far-reaching messages to Israel and the surrounding nations; his clear, detailed prophecies of the Messiah, given in masterful style and poetic grandeur, all testify of the Author of all prophecy.

h. Huldah, the prophetess (2 Kings 22:11-14), dwelt in the college at Jerusalem. She was summoned to give them the Lord's instruction as soon as the good king Josiah had discovered the book of the law. They heeded and were prospered as they received her testimonies. Obedience to the law has always brought with it the gift of prophecy for it was more perfect understanding, as Solomon had already observed. Proverbs 29:18. So it is with the remnant church in the world's end.

i. Jeremiah was faithful in severe trial and persecution, and failed not to warn of the captivity, and he foretold the time as being seventy years. Jeremiah 25:11, 12. Ezekiel and Daniel were given grand and lofty visions, remarkable for their broad scope and length to final fulfillment. Daniel tells something of the effect upon himself, and of Gabriel, the angel of prophecy. Apostasy draws over the dark curtain again, except for occasional glimpses of light given in messages to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These were not only for their contemporary peoples, but often reach to the final restoration of spiritual Israel.

j. "The gift of prophecy was manifested in the church during the Jewish dispensation. If it disappeared for a few centuries, on account of the corrupt state of the church toward the close of that dispensation, it reappeared at its close to usher in the Messiah. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, 'was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied.' Simeon, a just and devout man who was 'waiting for the consolation of Israel,' came by the Spirit into the temple, and prophesied of Jesus as 'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel;' and Anna, a prophetess, 'spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.' And there was no greater prophet than John the Baptist, who was chosen of God to introduce to Israel 'the Lamb of God ' that takes away the sin of the world.'" -R. F. Cottrell, in Introduction to "Spiritual Gifts," in "Early Writings," page 133.

k. Christ Himself was the chief of prophets. He was God's mouthpiece to call men again to the Father. His teaching, His healing, His daily life, testified of heavenly communications. He set before the world the dual forecast of Matthew 24, and several parables of prophetic import and application. Like other prophets, He was not received by many, since "a prophet is not without honor except in his own country." John 4:44. The rejection of this humble Prophet and His straight testimonies was cutting off again God's only avenue of appeal, and the rejection of His apostles sealed the doom of the Jewish nation. It is not a light thing to slight God given instruction, from whatever source it comes.

l. "That the gift of prophecy was known and operative in the days of the apostles is clear from a considerable number of passages. The record is that there 'came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.' Acts 11:27, 28.

"Some of the prophets of the New Testament are named by the writer of the Acts.

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen.' Acts 13:1.

" 'And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.' Acts 15:32.

"In Ephesus, when Paul baptized and laid his hands on certain disciples of the Lord, 'they spoke with tongues and prophesied.' Acts 19:6.

"As in the Old Testament, so in the New, the gift was not given exclusively to men, but to women as well. Speaking of Philip, the evangelist, Luke writes:

'The same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.' Acts 21:9.

"An incident in Paul's ministry in which the gift manifested itself, is thus described:

" 'There came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus says the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' Acts 21:10, 11. And we know it was a true prophecy.

"Instruction for regulating the exercise of the gift of prophecy in the church by both men and women is given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:4, 5.

“Believers are encouraged in 1 Corinthians 14:1-5, to desire and highly value the gift of prophecy, and instruction regarding its exercise is given in much detail in the remaining verses of this chapter.

“Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, makes it plain that prophets were associated with the apostles of Christ.

“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.’ Ephesians 3:5.” - C. B. Haynes, in “The Gift of Prophecy,” pages 45-47.

m. Surely, if ever God’s divine counsel was needed in a severe crisis and test of faith, it was in 1844—a time of dire need of light upon the Bible; a people of faith in God, tested severely; a people in whose heart was His law; a message due to the world. God must have a people organized to bear it in all its force and purity, to prepare the way for the great second coming of Christ; here all the conditions of former prophetic messages were met, and God graciously presented the remnant church with the gift.

KEY TEXTS

Amos 3:7,8

Hosea 12:13

Luke 7:28

Proverbs 29:18

2 Peter 1:19-21

2 Chronicles 20:20, last part

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Define “prophesy”, “prophecy.”
2. What is a prophet? What are his duties? What is his work?
3. How much of the Bible was written by prophets?
4. Do the same conditions exist in the remnant church that existed when the former prophets appeared?
5. What personal and church reforms were the burden of the testimonies of olden times?

TEST QUESTIONS

Answer With Ample Bible Proof

1. How have true prophets been called? Have they themselves chosen the work and announced their office?
2. By what different methods has God chosen to guide His people in counsel?
3. How did God “bring forth” and preserve Israel of old? By how many prophets did He do this?
4. How have the prophets, where we have the record, invariably felt upon receiving the call? Give examples.
5. Have prophets and their work continued throughout the latest dates of Bible times? Give examples.