

PROPHECY

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There are many people who believe that prophecy has two distinct meaning namely

1. The foretelling of some future event or events as revealed to someone by God Himself.
2. Forthtelling... in other words preaching of the exposition of some part of the Bible... telling forth the Word of God.

The apostle Paul preached in many places but most of his preaching was not prophecy. The Lord Jesus prophesied but most of his speaking was preaching not foretelling. His commission to His disciples was to go into all the world preaching

It is however true to say that the prophet is not defined or explained in the Old Testament nor were the prophets confined to Israel; there were false prophets as well.

Some of the prophets in the Old Testament are not called prophets but they were... such as Enoch (Jude 14), Abraham (Genesis 20. 7) and the Patriarchs generally (Psalm 105.15), Moses is said to be the law-giver but he was a prophet (Deuteronomy 18. 15 etc.).

The prophet is to God what Aaron was to Moses (Exodus 7. 1f). In other words the prophet is God's spokesman. Therefore what he says is entirely spiritual and does not contradict or add to God's Word. It does not go against the character and purposes of God.

At a Pentecostal meeting someone got up and prophesied that the Lord had told him that Mrs Jones was to give her new piano to the Sunday School.

That was not a prophecy. It was not spiritual. It was not of God. It was trickery.

At another such meeting a young woman got up and said, "The Lord has given me a word of prophecy and I want to pass it on to you.

I was walking along the beach... and I saw... and I said... and I was asked... and so I did.. I was so happy. I felt the Lord warm inside me... I was glad that I do this for the Lord... in bed that night the Lord was so close to me... etc."

That was not prophecy but an ego trip! But it was greeted with enthusiastic Praise the Lord, Amen, Hallelujah, Jesus, Sweet sweet Jesus repeated over and over again. Then tremendous applause and arm waving.

While some prophecy refers to distant future events, the Bible makes many references to the Second Coming and the Last Judgement and therefore unfulfilled prophecies. But the primary role of the prophet was to speak to the men of his own time and the situation in which they live. Therefore it is important for us to know the history and circumstances of the times. Probably the most obvious example is that of Jonah.

Bear in mind that the Old Testament books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings are called prophetic books. They were given to show the history of Israel as a revelation from God. The prophet Jeremiah told of the coming invasion of Babylon if Judah did not repent and for forty years he did this. It was a revelation from God. It deal with the circumstances of the time and Jeremiah and thousands of people witnessed the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Think of all the future events prophesied to the Hebrews about their deliverance from Egypt, wanderings in the wilderness and the Promised Land of milk and honey. These were prophecies, revelations from God. Consider the prophetic warnings of the godless people in the land of Canaan which they would encounter and how fraternising with such pagans would lead to disaster.

There were false prophets who claimed that they were true prophesying in the Name of God. They spoke of their ecstasies, wild dreams, visions and personal experiences (Jeremiah 23. 25). And we have such prophets today!

Apart from Ezekiel and parts of Isaiah, the majority of true prophecy was unpopular. The prophet would gain attention and be despised, assaulted, imprisoned or put to death. The Lord Jesus spoke about the unlawful killings of prophets.

In the days in which we live, Christians are being persecuted. Christian assembly in school is rare, the rights of homosexuals are more important than the beliefs of Christians, living with someone to whom you are not married is the same as being married to them and churches will not tolerate any preacher who truly preaches God's Word. They merely want words of comfort and do not entertain the slightest suggestion of criticism. But they do want entertainment. The local Methodist church recently advertised the Sunday morning sermon as Doughnuts are nicer than going to church as, of course, pop songs and dance in church is important! Really?

We must guard against the wrongful use of words and, although we shall be persecuted, we must stay true to the Word of God.

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