

# And These Three Remain

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SAMPLE

# Where Have All The Prophets Gone?

*"<sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." <sup>15</sup> The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram..."<sup>18</sup> Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." -- 1 Kings 17:13-15,18*

The gentleman was close to middle aged, nicely dressed, but not too fancy. He made sure his clothes were fixed and his look was just right. He was preparing to address an entire nation. He knew his words would likely not be popular, but he had no idea just how much of a stir they would cause. He did some last minute straitening of his clothes, and waited. Finally, it was time. The man got up and walked out into the courtyard where the people were gathered. All sorts of government leaders were present and people from around the nation had gathered to hear this man's words.

With little fanfare, the man addressed the people, told them to turn from their evil ways. He told them the sin they allowed to prevail in their lives needed to stop. People's lifestyles, which contradicted the Word of the Lord, needed to change. The evils prevalent in society needed to cease. The people needed to change their ways and stop tolerating that which was abominable to the Lord.

The man talked for a good while, delivering every word that God told him to give. The people listened politely, but when the man was finished speaking, they seized him. They were angry at his words. They did not believe God would speak through a man anymore, and they did not believe His Word was relevant to society anymore. They wanted to put that man to death for what he said!

A man delivered God's Word to God's people and those people wanted to put him to death for it. While I would love to take credit for such creative writing, the above story is actually a true one. Ok, so a little creative license was taken, but Jeremiah did speak to Israel and told them to turn away from their sin, or they would face destruction. The people of Israel listened intently and then seized him, intending to put him to death for his words.

Jeremiah was a prophet of the Lord. One of the great prophets of the Old Testament. God used His prophets all throughout the Old Testament to call His people to repentance and warn them of the disaster they were bringing on themselves. In the New Testament, God used prophets to bring encouragement and edification to His Church. Both are considered prophets of "Biblical times," but what about today? I would like to look into what a prophet was and is, clear up some popular misconceptions, and try to find out, where have all the prophets gone?

## ***What is a Prophet?***

When most people think about what a prophet is, they think "divine fortune teller." They think a prophet is nothing more than some Holy Oracle, and thus wonder why we do not see any of that today. They expect some man to go on CNN or FOX News and make some grand proclamation. While many of the Old Testament prophets did foresee future events and make "grand proclamations," there is more to prophecy than fortune telling. In order to discuss prophets and the gift of prophecy, I think it is important to first understand what a prophet is and what a prophet does. I believe the best description of what a prophet is can be found in the call of Isaiah:

<sup>1</sup> In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory."

<sup>4</sup> At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

<sup>5</sup> "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

<sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"  
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

<sup>9</sup> He said, "Go and tell this people:

"Be ever hearing, but never understanding;  
be ever seeing, but never perceiving."

-- Isaiah 6:1-9

The rest of the chapter is the rest of the message God wants Isaiah to deliver. I would like to encourage you all to take a moment and read it. For the purposes of this article, however, I would like to focus on the actual call of Isaiah and his response, as well as his reaction.

First, look at what God said, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" God was looking for someone to send. Send for what? Look at the next thing God tells Isaiah, "Go and tell this people" followed by the message He wanted Isaiah to deliver. God was looking for someone to deliver His message.

In this case, Isaiah was that someone. Look at how eagerly he responded to God's question: "Here am I. Send me!" I can almost picture Isaiah, hand in the air jumping to be noticed, like a kid in class when he knows the answer to a question. "Ooh, ooh, pick me! Pick me!! Come, on, let me do it!! Pick *mee!!!*" Isaiah was eager to serve

God, and what did God want him to do? Deliver a message.

That is what it really boils down to, isn't it? A prophet is a messenger of God. A man or woman called by God to bring His message to His people. Sometimes it can be a group of people, like an assembly, or sometimes it can be a single person. The main function of a prophet though, according to the Bible, was delivering God's messages.

I believe that applies to prophets today as well. I believe the gift of prophecy is still active in the church, but it is not the "get on CNN and make a grand proclamation or prediction to the country" style that most associate with the term. I believe that God gives some people messages to deliver to His people.

Many ask, why? If we have the Bible, why are prophets needed? It is true that the Bible is complete and that God is *not* giving us any new revelations that would equate to chapters of His Word today, so why have prophets? Truth be told, the reasons for such revelations are known only to God. However, I do think we can see some of those reasons in the Bible.

By looking at why God gave the prophets of the Bible messages to deliver, we can see why God gives people today messages to deliver. I do believe that God still gives people messages to deliver today, and I think the reasons God used prophets in the Bible are valid reasons for today. For example, God used Isaiah to bring hope and encouragement to His people:

<sup>12</sup> "I, even I, am he who comforts you.

Who are you that you fear mortal men,  
the sons of men, who are but grass,

<sup>13</sup> that you forget the LORD your Maker,  
who stretched out the heavens  
and laid the foundations of the earth,

that you live in constant terror every day  
because of the wrath of the oppressor,  
who is bent on destruction?  
For where is the wrath of the oppressor?  
<sup>14</sup> The cowering prisoners will soon be set free;  
they will not die in their dungeon,  
nor will they lack bread.  
<sup>15</sup> For I am the LORD your God,  
who churns up the sea so that its waves roar-  
the LORD Almighty is his name.  
-- Isaiah 51:12-15

Prophets of today should do the same thing. Paul tells us:

<sup>3</sup>But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. <sup>4</sup>He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. <sup>5</sup>I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified. -- 1 Corinthians 14:3-5

Another reason could be to call His people to action. A good example of this is Ezekiel's call for Israel to repent:

<sup>30</sup> "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD . Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. <sup>31</sup> Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? <sup>32</sup> For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD . Repent and live! -- Ezekiel 18:30-32

In the Old Testament, God would send His prophets to call people to repentance. I believe God does the same thing today to call people to prayer. Both are a "call to arms" of sorts. Action needs to be taken on a large scale by God's people, and that is another part of why God uses prophets. I believe part of that, is preventing disaster. In both cases, in both calls to repentance and calls to prayer, God can reveal what may happen in order for His people to take action, be it repentance or prayer, to keep the calamity from occurring. For example, look at what and why Jeremiah warned Israel of:

<sup>1</sup>Early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> "This is what the LORD says: Stand in the courtyard of the LORD's house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the LORD . Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word. <sup>3</sup> Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. <sup>4</sup> Say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you, <sup>5</sup> and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), <sup>6</sup> then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of cursing among all the nations of the earth.' " -- Jeremiah 26:1-6

The pastor of the Church my wife and I attended when we first got married told me once, "Sometimes God will reveal something to one of His children, so that child can call his brothers and sisters to prayer." Just like God would reveal Israel's destruction to His prophets so they would call Israel to repent, I believe that today God can reveal a calamity to one of His children so he will call his brothers and sisters to prayer.

God can use prophets for any number of reason, and like I mentioned, reasons are truly only known to Him. However by looking at why God has used prophets in the past, we can gain some insight into why He uses them now. Prophecy is a gift that is "to be eagerly desired." While I do not expect anyone to get on a 24 hour news channel and warn of impending doom or make grand proclamations, I do believe God still uses people to deliver His messages; messages used to encourage and edify His Children, or call them to prayer.

Strictly speaking, a prophet is a messenger of God. God will reveal Himself to one of His children to encourage His people, all them to action, or any number of reasons known only to Him. While I believe prophets are still active today, I also believe we need to be careful. There are many who claim to be prophets who are serving their own interests instead of the interests of our Father.

### ***What is a Prophet Not?***

In Biblical times, as well as today, false prophets abound. They did, and do, deliver false messages and give false teachings. The issue of false prophets and false teachers is a study unto itself. However, recognizing them is important. I would like to make a few brief, but important contrasts:

1. A false prophet is only interested in bringing glory to himself, and raising himself up. A true prophet will choose to give God all the credit and lift His Name on high. Most true prophets, in my opinion, will not even call themselves prophets. The certainly will not draw attention to themselves, but rather make sure the focus in on God and His message. He will focus on what it is God wants His people to do or know. Even Jesus, who was God, did not bring glory to Himself, but rather gave it to His Father in Heaven. He told His disciples, "These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me" (John 14:24). If Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, made sure all glory went to the Father, who is man to try and take that glory for himself? Still some false prophets seek such glory at the expense of God's message and God's people.
2. A false prophet may be arrogant or self aggrandizing. A true prophet will be meek and humble. Notice how unworthy Isaiah felt to be in the presence of the Lord. "Woe to me!" He cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). Elijah had the same reaction, when "he pulled his cloak over his face" (1 Kings 17:13). Neither of them considered themselves to be worthy of serving the Lord, rather in their humility, they tried to hide themselves. They did not try to draw attention to themselves, but rather away from themselves and to the Lord. Both were bold in their actions for the Lord, as well they should be. However neither were condescending in their actions or attitudes. A false prophet will often consider himself better than the "lay people" and that attitude will show through.
3. A false prophet will be a liar and will try to take advantage of people. A true prophet will help those in need and comfort those who are in distress. In a letter to Timothy, Paul warned, "They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth--men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected" (2 Timothy 3:6-8). Many false prophets are "in it for the money" and will say anything to gain earthly goods at the expense of others. Their "message" is nothing more than a means to an end.

You can often recognize a false prophet by his message. Is he edifying the Church, or lifting himself up? Is his message one of encouragement, or is he trying to further his own agenda? More importantly, is what he says in line with the scriptures, or does his teaching contradict God's Word? Even more important than that, perhaps *most* importantly, does the individual deny Christ? The Bible is absolutely clear, that anyone who denies Jesus, in any way, is a false prophet and will bring destruction on themselves.

If someone claims to be a prophet, they should be put to a thorough test because false prophets are plentiful and can deceive those who are still babes in Christ. The day is coming though, when even mature Christians will be deceived. Therefore, we all need to keep watch and examine prophets carefully. Otherwise we will never know when a false prophet is in our midst.

## ***Majority Rules?***

There are many false prophets in our midst today, and some of them have rather large groups of followers. Sadly, these large groups of followers are being taught things that are not in line with scriptures. However, people do not seem to be as discerning. Earlier this month, I read an article which shared some pretty disturbing statistics. With the writer's permission, I will share them here. They originally come from the Barna Group:

- Half of born-again Christians (50%) agree that Satan is "not a living being but is a symbol of evil." (2004)
- About one-third of born-again (38%) believe that if a person is good enough they can earn a place in Heaven. (2004)
- 31 percent of born-again agree that "while he lived on earth, Jesus committed sins, like other people," compared to 44 percent of all adults. (2004)
- 15 percent of born-again Christians claim that "after He was crucified and died, Jesus Christ did not return to life physically." (2000)
- About one out of four (26%) born-again Christians believe that it doesn't matter what faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons; a belief held by 56 percent of non-Christians. (2000)

An alarming number of Christians have beliefs that are not in line with what is in the Bible. Many are being taught these things by people who style themselves as "prophets." Fortunately, there are still plenty of beliefs that a majority of Christians hold that are in line with the Scriptures.

Does that mean that the majority rules? Is something 'correct' because a majority of Christians still believe it, or believe that it is inline with God's word? Many Christians believe the above statements are inline with God's Word. If that becomes the majority view instead of the minority view, does that make it so? What do we do when basic tenets of our faith, such as the deity and the humanity of Christ, become minority views?

In a recent *Reflections* article ([Paying the Penalty for Sin, #152](#)), Al Maxey addressed the question as to whether Jesus' atonement was complete, or merely a token. Prior to writing the article, he polled his readers, and a majority of the responses he received were from people who believe our debt was paid in full at the cross. In his discussion, Al Maxey said, "I happen to agree with the majority position!"

While I too, happen to agree with the majority position, does the fact that it is the *majority* view make it right? or true? I will be honest, whenever I receive feedback on an article, especially if it is negative, I take solace in the fact that a *majority* of the feedback is supportive in nature, and that a *majority* of you feel the same and agree with what was written. However, does that in itself mean I am correct? Is the majority opinion on any given topic make that the correct opinion?

After giving the matter a lot of prayer and study, I can say that I do not believe that to be the case. The above article came out while I was contemplating this question, so I asked Al Maxey what he thought. He responded thus:

*No, I most definitely don't think the majority is always right...one can look at the religious world about us and clearly see that the majority of people are confused about a great many things. I believe that is why the Lord has always looked on His people as a "remnant." MANY are called, but FEW are chosen. The broad road and wide gate ... and the narrow road and gate.*

I think he stated it perfectly. That, of course, begs the question, "What do we do when the truth is in the minority?" Already those who profess Christ are not only teaching things that go against God's Word, and some of them actively tear down Christians who stand by what Scripture tells us. I believe we can find an answer in the Scripture by looking at the prophets and at how they dealt with it. Elijah, in particular, presents a fine example of a man who "went against the flow" and took a stand for Lord even though his was in the minority.

Elijah went up against, and defeated, 450 prophets of Baal single handedly. At the time, Elijah was in a very small minority. He basically was the minority, at least he felt that way. Israel was ruled by King Ahab, who did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of the kings before him (1 Kings 16:30). King Ahab led Israel into deep sin, and most of Israel followed his lead. They had rejected God and His teachings, preferring to worship idols made by human hands. Most of God's prophets had been put to death, and Elijah was threatened with death himself.

Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal. He sent word and had all 450 of them meet him on Mt. Carmel. Their entire group built an altar, put up a bull and prayed to their god. They all prayed, danced, and pleaded with their god to bring down fire for their offering. Nothing. Zip. Nada. Their "god" could not produce so much as a spark.

When they were done, it was Elijah's turn. He was one prophet of the Lord. By himself, he took 12 stones and built an altar of the Lord. Then he cut up bull and laid it out for an offering. Before he prayed, he had the Israelites douse his altar and offering so thoroughly that the water filled a trench dug around it. Elijah then prayed to the Lord:

"O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." -- 1 Kings 18:36-37

The Lord answered Elijah's prayer and sent fire that not only consumed the offering, not only consumed the altar, but licked up every drop of water (about 15 liters worth) in the trench surrounding it. Elijah then commanded the Israelites to seize and kill all the prophets of Baal. Elijah was in the minority, however he stood firm and, more importantly, he continued to trust in the Lord. He relied on God and with the Lord's help, was victorious over the false prophets of his day.

This victory, however, was short lived. King Ahab told his wife Jezebel what happened, and Jezebel threatened Elijah's life. Elijah got scared and fled. He was fresh from his victory, on a spiritual high, but then he fled. Elijah fled to Mt. Horeb, where he talked to the Lord. In essence, Elijah fled to the Lord. God took care of Elijah (1 Kings 19:6), and then sent him back to finish working for Him. And Elijah did just that. He confronted King Ahab again, and this time Ahab humbled himself before the Lord (1 Kings 21:27).

- As a side note, I would like to point out that even though Elijah ran, he ran to God. From this, I think it is important to realize that it is ok to run. Throughout our lives, each of us will face spiritual battles, and sometimes it will seem as though the enemy is coming after us relentlessly. I will seem as though they are pressing us non-stop and that there is nothing we can do to hold up against such an onslaught. This will often happen after a large spiritual victory. When that happens, run. It is ok. Like Elijah, run into your Father's arms. Nobody and nothing can touch you there. God will give you the respite you need; then, like Elijah, send you out to claim the victory that is yours.

As we can see from Elijah's example, he had his ups and downs, but was ultimately successful in standing for the Lord. The majority of Israel had turned against the truth, but Elijah chose to take a stand against that majority and stand for what right. In doing so, he overcame all the prophets of Baal and humbled the king of a nation.

Being in the minority is not easy, especially when you need to take a stand against the majority. However in our day, a good many people are confused about a good number of things. I also believe the day is coming where those who hold the truth will be in the minority. When that happens, we must follow Elijah's example. We must

take a stand for the truth. we may need to flee to the Lord for some respite, and that is ok. The Lord will sustain and strengthen us, then we too can spread the truth of our Lord.

## ***CONCLUSION:***

Where have all the prophets gone? Or have they? It is a subject that has been hotly debated by men and women much more knowledgeable by myself. However, much of that debate, I believe, is due to misconceptions about what a prophet is. As we have seen from Scripture, a prophet is a messenger of God. God has used prophets to perform great signs and wonders in the past, but I do not believe he does that anymore. The Bible tells us, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

In deed, prophets of God would make "grand proclamations" to the people of Israel. Today, however, that is not necessarily the case. Since Jesus came, lived, died and rose, the role of a prophet has changed. God certainly can, if He chooses to, have a prophet make any proclamation or do any wondrous work, but I believe He instead uses prophets to deliver messages, "to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3). A prophet will not likely get on CNN or FOX News and make proclamations to the country, but he or she will bring hope and encouragement to people or assemblies.

We need to be wary though, because one thing I can state unequivocally, is that there are false prophets among us. False prophets are only interested in bringing glory to themselves. They may put up a good facade, but inside they are arrogant and even power hungry. They will lie, cajole and con their way to get what they want. They will teach things that lead to destruction. As such we need to be on guard, not only for our sake, but for the sake of all our brothers and sisters who may be led astray. We need to take a stand against false prophets, take a stand for the truth.

Such a stand may not be popular, but as the old adage goes, we need to "do what is right, not what is popular." Elijah took a stand against an entire nation and won not only their hearts back to the Lord, but the heart of their king as well. When we take a stand on the truth we may well be scorned by the majority, Elijah was, to the point of being threatened with death! However, like Elijah, we must rely on the Lord for our strength and comfort, flee to Him when necessary, and then stand upon Him. He is our foundation and He will sustain us and bring us to victory. After all, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).