



December 2, 2007

The First Prophet

Last week we began a discussion of prophets and prophecy in the Bible and defined two roles that prophets filled. The first of these was to declare the word of God to the intended audience. Secondly, prophets foretold of events that were to come about at some point in the future. In this sense, prophecy begins early in the scriptures and we can identify the first prophet as God himself. In the first sense, God declares his will to Adam and Eve when he gave them instructions for what they were to do in the garden where he had placed them. The couple was told to dress and keep the garden (**Gen 2.15**), to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth (**Gen 1.28**) and they could eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden as well as the “herbs yielding seed” (**Gen 1.29**). God declared one prohibition; they were not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, stating that death would be the consequence for violating this (**Gen 2.17**). These statements are mirrored in the prophets who later followed at the direction and command of God. A precedent is set in this first declaration. The commands and consequences for disobedience came from God. Later, God gave instructions for how the children of Israel would be able to recognize a prophet which we will discuss further on. God is the first source of true prophecy in his statement and imposition of the consequences on Adam and Eve for their disobedience. As he stated these, the Lord foretold of the coming of one who would be of the seed of woman. God stated that the serpent, Satan, would bruise his heel, but that the offspring of the woman (Christ) would bruise the head of the serpent, thus delivering a death blow to the Devil and his power over mankind through death and eternal separation from God (**Gen 3.15**). The writer of Hebrews bears out this point as he characterizes Christ as one who had come in the form of a man and through his own obedience and sacrifice destroyed the power of Satan to bring about the eternal destruction of mankind through sin and death (**Heb 2.14-16**). From this point forward, God delivers his message to those who were chosen to reveal his will. Peter indicates that

the prophets, or “holy men of old” did not speak by any private interpretation, but did so as they were moved by the spirit of God (**2 Pet 1.21**). This is one of the tests of a prophet. If the things that were foretold or spoken by the prophet, in reference to future events, did not come true, then they were not to pay heed to such as they had spoken of their own accord. God warned the children of Israel through Moses of this and gave penalties for dealing with any who would speak “presumptuously” (**Deut 18.22**). *“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”* (**Deut 13.1-3**). One of the ways in which false prophets could be identified, as noted in the passage above, was that they would seek to draw the people away from God. Christ warned of this same thing when he spoke to his disciples, telling them that there would be false prophets and false Christs seeking to deceive (**Matt 24.24**). False prophets indeed arose from time to time opposing the word that had been given through legitimate servants of the Lord. Peter warns us of this in his writings as well. *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”* (**2 Pet 2.1**). God told the children of Israel, *“Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.”* (**Deut 13.4**). The final statement of prophecy, the declaration and record of God’s will, is contained within the pages of the scriptures and the warnings to avoid those who teach falsely, are just as real and valid today as they were when they were recorded.

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