



November 25, 2007

Prophets

Over the next few weeks we are going to take a look at the lives of some of the prophets that we read about in the Bible. Before we begin that however it is necessary that we understand what a prophet is and the nature of biblical prophecy. From large scale denominational revivals to fantasy novels and movies, the idea of prophecy is one of the staples of any well developed story in the genre, along with the idea of a “chosen one” and the disbelief that goes along with that until proof is provided, a battle fought, etc, etc. My opinion is that the idea of prophecies, prophets and “chosen ones” all have been influenced by the power and spread of the gospel. Although the Bible is regarded as just a story by many, the prevalence of the ideas stated in the scriptures have served as a model for the imagination of mankind. What is real prophecy and what is the role or function of a real prophet? The first thing that comes to mind is the aspect of telling the future. In the Bible we find that this is one of the things that prophets do, but it is not the only thing that they have done, nor does it appear to be their primary purpose. Simply foretelling events would be meaningless if there was not a greater purpose involved. There are different aspects of a prophet. One of the primary roles was to declare the word or will of God. The idea of prophesying, or forth telling, carries with it the idea of stating or declaring knowledge that God wanted people to be aware of. Another role that prophets filled is that of making some aware of wrongdoing that God will deal with. The essential purpose for making this known, most of the time, was to give those who received the message time to correct their actions and make themselves right with God. The correction being delivered, depending on the circumstances, may have involved the declaration of a judgment by God, which included an element of foretelling the future. This was to allow the people to know that when certain things came to pass or began to happen that they were spoken by God. This would, or should have, instilled confidence in God and the prophets. We will see that this is one of the ways in which a prophet

would be established as being from God, and therefore one whose words were to be attended to. The image of a prophet in popular culture has come to be represented by a mysterious, often cloaked figure, that lives in strange or shadowy circumstances and rarely makes an appearance except to convey words of doom. This of course makes for a fine story but there is a misconception concerning the nature of the prophets and their lives. They were often separated from others, usually because in their declaration of the truth, others sought to silence them by killing them. Prophets, wizards and other figures that fill the minds of people today, are depicted as being in possession of power which has no declared source except in the depths of some mysterious and ancient secret that has been carefully guarded and passed to only a select few; the initiated. Prophets in the Bible are described as being filled with the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, and the source of their declarations is neither shadowy nor mysterious. God was the presence behind the revelation and directives that were given. Prophets did not work outside the scope of God's laws and so did not create or make up the things that they stated. Biblical prophecy was not something which was judged with a relative degree of accuracy. It was known when the fulfillment occurred as it stated. God gave ways in which the people would know if a prophet had been sent by His authority. This did involve things that were foretold but were stated within the context of warnings, blessings and the unfolding of God's will for all of mankind. The number of the prophets reaches back to the beginning of the Biblical narrative and includes both God the Father and Christ. The Bible contains promises and warnings given prophetically in the beginning and ends with the same as John recounts the judgment of humanity in the last day in the book of Revelation.

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