



**Standing
in the
Gap**

The Difference Between
True and False Prophets

Daten Garris

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True and False Prophets**

Dalen Garris

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And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

Ezekiel 22:30

Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

Ezekiel 13:5

Introduction

There are two gospels pulling us in two directions. Like sisters birthed from the same womb but with different temperaments, they look alike and have a family resemblance, but their personalities, their likes and dislikes, and even their senses of morality are very different.

One is the old fashioned gospel of righteousness, holiness, and a crucified walk in the fear of God. There is a call to the Cross and a path of suffering for the cause of Christ that those who do not follow this path can rarely understand. It seems legalistic and judgmental to others, but to those who adhere to that call, it is a walk sustained by grace that separates them from the world.

The other gospel is one of softer sentiments. Grace becomes more about continued forgiveness, love, and blessings. God becomes more of a loving father than someone to be feared. The suffering and crucified walk of the other gospel changes to one of love, peace, and presumptive faith.

The paths of these two gospels diverge and lead to different destinations. Our destiny is determined, therefore, by the path we choose to follow.

God calls prophets as sheep dogs to warn the shepherds and the flocks of the dangers around them. They are the watchmen on the wall who are accountable to God for warning the church. As such, they are the seers, the eyes of the church. They can see the danger long before anyone else, including the pastors.

Revival and apostasy go in cycles. It has been this way since the times of Joshua. When the church is doing well and the Spirit of God is flowing through her, prophets are not needed. But once the church begins to fall into apostasy, the alarms go off and they are called to stand in the gaps and declare unto the church her sins and transgressions.

When the prophets bring a message of peace and prosperity when they should be recognizing danger, they become the primary cause that the church loses her power in God. They were supposed to call the church back to a place of repentance so God could bless the church. Instead they allowed the church to wander into the wilderness of sin.

At this same time, Satan will propagate as many false prophets as possible to drown out the true prophets and keep the church in ignorance. The contrast between true and false prophets is easy to see against the backdrop of Scripture, but when a curtain of darkness is lowered over the eyes of the church, she can no longer see and doesn't know what she is stumbling over.

I wrote the articles in this book over a span of several years to alert the church to this new, soft gospel, but I have watched as this new gospel has gained ground and continue to grow. As alarming as that seems, I know that for revival to take root, this false message of cheap grace, artificial love, and presumption rather than true faith will have to be exposed so that true righteousness can come in. And that will happen.

The articles in this book are the barking of a sheep dog to bring that about and call the people of God back to their true place in God.

True Prophets

1) A true prophet is determined first of all by his message.

It is what he says that sets him apart from false prophets. A true prophet is called to preach against sin and call the people of God to repentance. His voice is always aimed at the false religion that is infiltrated into the true religion.

“But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.”(Micah 3:8)

A false prophet, on the other hand, never preaches about repentance (Jer.23:14, 17), but his message is always targeted on the “smooth things” that people want to hear.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;” 2 Timothy 4:3

2) A true prophet is also known by his attitude – how he says it.

A true prophet is never part of the crowd and does not care what anyone thinks. He is not like everyone else and cannot “fit in”. He walks to a different rhythm and hears a different melody. In order to deliver the message that God has given him, he cannot be affected in any way by the opinions of others or what the crowd believes is right. As a result, true prophets rarely care about softening their message to accommodate their listeners. They simply do not care what others think of them.

3) A true prophet has a solitary walk.

He walks alone with God. He hears only God; no one else. A.W. Tozer wrote, “In order for God to use a man, he has to be separated so that God can speak to him in such a way that the man can hear God. Only the man who can hear God can speak for God.” It is part of his consecrated walk. In order to clearly hear the true voice of God, there must be silence so that he may abide in that “secret place of the Most High”. Elijah had his cave on Mount Horeb, Joseph had his prison, Jacob his 21 years under Laban, and Jesus his 40 days in the wilderness. These are places you can only go through alone, but it is in those valleys that true prophets find the depth of their calling and the deep fellowship with the Cross. It is a filter that false prophets cannot pass.

4) A true prophet is known by his personality and perspective on life.

Prophets are not celebrities. God calls them out of obscurity so that it is the message that gets the attention, not the messenger. Jesus said that no prophet receives honor in their own country. When you find a so-called prophet who is greatly honored and celebrated, and whose books are on the Best Seller list, check on his message. More often than not, the reason everyone likes him is because he is telling them what they want to hear.

“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.” (1 John 4:5)

5) A true prophet is known by his purpose – what his job is.

“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.” Ezekiel 22:30

Prophets are called to stand in the gaps of the walls that are broken down to hold back the judgments of God. (Eze. 22:30). Those walls are the defenses surrounding the Church that are supposed to hold back the enemy. When they are broken down through sin, the church is left defenseless against the destruction of Satan.

Prophets are not called to be Gypsies or horoscope fortunetellers. Their job is to stand in the gaps and rebuild the wall so they can bring the people back to righteousness and renew their proper relationship with God.

6) A true prophet cannot be cultivated or taught; he has to be called by God.

A.W.Tozer said, *“Only God can prepare a prophet to do the ministry of a prophet. The schools of the prophet never produced an Elijah or an Elisha.”*

That’s because they weren’t schools. The Hebrew word used in Kings and Chronicles means an organization or group, as in a school of fish, not an educational institution. You can’t teach someone how to be a prophet. A true prophet is called by God. He does not call himself.

7) A true prophet is always aware of the presence of God and must walk a consecrated walk without sin.

Elijah had a sense that God was standing right behind him (“...the Lord God, before whom I stand...”), watching everything he did. He didn’t dare cross the line into worldliness and sin. Because of the intense degree with which God must operate through His prophets, He cannot work through a vessel that is disobedient. Sin separates you from God (Isa.59:2).

8) A true prophet must be crucified.

He must be a man of deep, prevailing prayer and ready to pay a heavy price of a deeply crucified walk, broken and surrendered to everything around him. Paul said he was crucified unto the world and the world was crucified unto him (Gal 6:14). There has to be a complete rejection of the world and everything in the world. (1John 2:15) His whole cognizance must be immersed in the Spirit of God, not in this world. That makes him different – he is not of this world.

9) A true prophet is humble and walks in a deeper fear of God than others.

He understands that he is nothing without God and is able to give God all the glory. He desires nothing for himself. Let others keep their riches. The prophet of God is sustained by God, not man. Neither does he need or seek glory for himself. Just as John the Baptist handed over his ministry to Jesus upon his arrival at Jordan, so a true prophet gives all the glory to God.

10) A true prophet goes against the flow.

God has a different set of priorities than we do and, as a result, His direction is often different than ours. A prophet is tied to the directions of God and often finds himself going against the flow of the Church and often the popular “prophetic flow”. This almost always leads to rejection from the very ones that he is sent to save.

Jesus said that no prophet is accepted in his own country and among his own people. When you find a prophet that is well honored by the Christian institutions, it is likely that he is not a true prophet, but is being honored because he is telling them what their “itching ears” want to hear. The whole purpose of a prophet is to pull against the flow that leads the Church into worldliness and sin.

11) To get a better understanding and a clearer picture of what a prophet is, read the Prophets.

Listen to their hearts, feel the cries of their hearts when they cry out to a rebellious people. Feel the rejection and loneliness that they are left with. But also feel the strength of righteousness in their voice and the power of authority in their stand against a church that has fallen away from God and is now walking in darkness and do not know at what they stumble. (Prov. 4:19)

The Lord showed me that His Bride is becoming invisible. She has put on garments that are full of golden jewels, pearls, and beautiful costly array. She is beginning to look just like the world and is fading away.

God is losing His Bride, and we need true prophets to bring Her back.

Revival vs. Reformation

There is talk out there in theological circles about the difference between the terms Revival and Reformation. (I won't bore you - look it up in Webster's)

A real move of God is usually neither. Real moves of God are almost always rebellion.

Biblical history records a repetitive cycle of Apostasy, going all the way back to the Red Sea. First you have the heady excitement of being part of a great move of God, but after a while, however, the fire dies down and the people of God settle into complacency. (It seems we only prosper under adversity.)

Complacency always slides into a worldly apostasy where the dividing lines between holy vs. profane and godly vs. worldly, become blurred. (Note the support these days for homosexual Bishops).

At that point, God sends His prophets with warnings to repent ... or else.

Now, the job of a prophet is not just to tell the future - Gypsies with crystal balls and Tarot cards do that. The real job of a prophet is to "stand in the gaps" and call the people of God back to a place of repentance. Their prophecies are merely a result of their call for judgment. Light and vain prophets of prosperity, like what we see today, are not true prophets of God.

Real prophets of God are almost always rejected, but the seed that they plant take root in the hearts of those who have a hunger for righteousness and Truth. Often, they do not get to see the results of their labor, but the seed does grow, and the next wave of believers will come forth out of it to reject the old system and establish a new move of God.

A new move of God always brings persecution that, for some reason, is the nourishment that fuels the drive and dedication to principle that is needed to separate us from the dead carcass that was the Church of the previous age. You need look no further than the fiery beginnings of your own denomination to see this.

I don't see a reformation of the churches, per se. What I see is a rebellion that becomes a rejection of them and a rebirth of the original principles of the Word of God.

The bottom line is, when the church is dead, it's dead, plain and simple. Ever hear of "beating a dead horse"? It's just not going to get up and go anywhere no matter how much you try to pump its lungs. No theological discussion will ever breathe life back into it.

The problem with dead churches is that they don't think they're dead -- hence, the persecution.

What is coming is something entirely new. Look at the Army in the second chapter of the Book of Joel. They don't sound like "church people" to me. Quite the contrary, they'd probably get thrown out of most of the churches today. And yet, this is the move of God that is coming.

Pray for a move of God. Pray to see a fresh outpouring of the Holy Ghost and to see men of God that are really on fire -- something we haven't seen in a while. I want to see warriors stand up in the authority of the power of God to bring forth thundering messages of Holy Ghost Conviction in the Spirit of God -- not prepared messages of homogenized swill and conciliatory Pabulum to placate their congregations.

What's my point? High-sounding theological scholasticism is a carnal diversion. And to be carnally minded is death. Call it revival, reformation, restoration, rebellion, rejection -- whatever. Who cares what you call it!

A rose by any other name is just as sweet.

Prophetic Spirits

“A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.” (Proverbs 14:25)

I am worried about a trend I see in today's churches that seems to have caught on without any restraints or questions as to its validity. I am talking about our rush toward pursuing this “prophetic spirit” that so many have been enamored with.

Churches these days are rife with schools for prophets. They even have schools for children to learn how to develop a prophetic spirit. How we long to hear from God! But is this a talent that can be learned or taught? The retort always points to the references in the books of Samuel and Kings. But were these classrooms to teach young people Prophecy 101? Is there a Five Step program to becoming a prophet? Is there something that can be written down in a manual for would-be prophets?

The Bible does not mention a school of prophets – it talks of a “company” of prophets. The Hebrew is “hebel”, a union or group that is woven together like a rope. It is related to “habel”, which has to do with a pledge or a security taken. In other words, there were groups of prophets who were bound together by their commitment to one another and to God. No schools. No course of education. No seminars for 99 bucks to sign up for and be the first on your block to have a “prophetic spirit”. A true prophet of God is called, not schooled – and God calls you. You do not call yourself.

I have noticed a remarkable telltale sign that is universal with these “prophetic spirits” - they never talk about repentance, judgment or the fear of God. It is always something warm and fuzzy about how God is going to bless you and how you are about to “enter into your harvest”, or something innocuous like that. How nice.

But that’s not what I see in the Bible. As a matter of fact, Jeremiah declares that when a prophet of peace utters a word of prophesy, we are to wait and see if it happens first. (Jer. 28:9). According to the Bible, the effectiveness of a prophet is measured by his ability to bring the people of God to a place of repentance. (Jer. 23:22) Maybe we should read the 23rd chapter of Jeremiah again before we start spouting off with our “fair-haired boy” prophecies. Or is that not in the syllabus for our schools of prophets?

The job of a prophet is to stand in the gaps of the wall that has been broken down and declare unto the people of God their sins and transgressions so that they may repent and come back to God (Eze. 22:30). But those prophets always have a difficult time getting any traction in the Church. They’re not polite, neither do they seem to care if they hurt our feelings. Maybe that’s because they really have heard from God, not from their ethereal thoughts. They know exactly what the message is and who it is that has told them. There are no misfires or mistakes. It doesn’t matter if you don’t believe it - you will soon enough.

Today's prophets are told they can waffle with their results because they "prophesy according to the measure of their faith". What does that mean? You don't have to be responsible for falsely declaring a word from God? You were stoned in the Old Testament, but now it's just "Aw, shucks"? Is it just a matter of keeping the message "positive" and "edifying" so that it always appeals to the crowd with "itching ears"?

A solitary prophet, who tried for years to get Israel to repent from their "churchy" ways, sat in a ruined city after everything he had tried to call them to had failed, and cried out,

"Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment." (Lamentations 2:14)

If we find ourselves in the same situation, we can expect the same results.

What we are chasing is not some prophetic spirit from God, but a spirit of divination from the powers of darkness. It is designed to lead the Church away from a place of repentance through the fear of God and into a "Pollyanna" type Gospel where everything is beautiful and it is all about grace and love. But honestly, they are only telling us what we want to hear. They are the Gypsy tea leaf readers of the church today. And we respond by buying their books and videos as they lead us like a Pied Piper onto the Good Ship Lollipop to sail away with them.

But the reality is much harsher. This is war, and Satan has done his job well in defusing our outlook into one of détente, one that leads away from repentance. As we are lulled to sleep and drift off into a kinder and gentler Gospel, we lose our sharp edge and our ability to see with a spiritual clarity that only comes from the fear of God. We have forsaken the right way and chosen for ourselves and our children an easier path that leads away from the Cross, not toward it.

Jonah gasps to us from the belly of the whale that those who observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. Let us take care that the “word from the Lord” we are itching to speak over others is from the Throne of God and not some enticing spirit of divination.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;” (1st Timothy 4:1)

Touch Not My Anointed

“Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” (Psalms 105:15)

I think it is no secret that Satan would try anything to destroy the Church. To keep the flock from straying under Satan’s influence, the Lord has placed the church under the authority of the pastor. Deacons and elders play a subordinate role in most churches, and we are supposed to be subject one to another, but the truth is, most often the pastor is fully in charge and the flock is supposed to submit unto him.

But who does the pastor answer to?

I have heard Benny Hinn say that we should not reprove the pastors because we are not to “touch His anointed”, using David and Saul as the example. Let me remind you that while David would not come against Saul, Samuel had no such inhibition, nor did Nathan, Micaiah, Amos or any other prophet of God. The king may be in charge, but by God, he’d better listen to the prophet!

That scripture, however, has nothing to do with reproof of a pastor. It is about protection from the enemy. David is speaking in Psalms 105 about how God protected Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from those who would come against them. He was not talking about reprovng pastors and holding them accountable.

So who holds our pastors in check or guides them when they stray? That is the job of a prophet.

A true prophet has a solitary walk. In order to be able to reprove kings, his message cannot be influenced by anyone. He must remain separate, consecrated unto God alone. His job is to stand in the gaps (Eze. 13:5) and call the church, and most especially the leadership, back to a place of repentance. He is not called to be popular or make friends. Jesus said that no prophet is honored in his own country and among his own people. Why? Because he doesn't tell them what they want to hear. When you do see a prophet that is honored in his own country, it is most likely because he is a prophet of "peace and prosperity".

Modern prophets of peace and prosperity in this generation like to lean heavily on the scripture in 1st Corinthians 14:3 in their effort to "speak unto us smooth things" (Isa. 30:10), but they never call us to repentance. According to Jeremiah, however, that call to bring the church to a place of repentance is the litmus test of a true prophet of God (Jer. 23:22), a test that many of today's blessing prophets fail.

Prophets are called, as the priest in chapter 14 of Leviticus, to scour and cut out the leprosy in the house. If the leprosy is cured, then the house can remain. If it is not, then the entire house and everything left in it are to be burned outside the camp. When the leadership of any church will not allow itself to be reprovved, leprosy will grow unabated in that house. Satan is ecstatic because he can continue to lead the pastor away without the terrible interference from God's prophet. It is now only a matter of time before that church falls.

The real losers in this are the unsaved. Sinners will not flock to altars that have lost their anointing.

And that was Satan's goal all along.

“And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” (1Kings 19:10)

Prophets

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: Zechariah 13:4

It seems that we are always hearing about some new “Prophetic Ministry” that has risen up. Our first natural reaction is to be excited to hear some new word from God. So many times, however, we only hear the same message that we’ve already heard from the last “prophetic ministry”. The themes usually center on wonderful promises of all the good things that God is going to do for us shortly, and we leave feeling really good about ourselves. Often, these people with this “gift of prophecy” will tell us something personal in our lives that are coming. We’re getting a new car, or we will soon take a trip, or there will be a change in our lives. How wonderful to get to hear a personal message straight to us from God Himself. It’s almost like having your own personal Christian horoscope.

Rarely, do we hear prophetic messages of “doom and gloom”, judgment, repentance, and the Fear of the Lord. Those kinds of messages don’t draw crowds and they sure don’t sell tickets. We don’t want to hear bad stuff; we want to hear good stuff. We don’t want to hear something that will make us afraid; we want to hear something that makes us feel good. As we see crowds flocking to these “feel good” ministries, we see more and more of these “prophetic” ministries pop up.

Is that really what prophets of God are supposed to be like? Are prophets now become little more than fortunetellers and entertainers? How do they and their messages measure up against the prophets in the Bible and the kinds of messages that they brought forth?

I have an old saying that, "Everybody wants to be an Elijah, but nobody wants to pay the price". I don't see any of the prophets in the Bible jumping up and down for joy over the calling that was placed upon them. The job of prophet is hard, and the price that is required is more than what human flesh wants to pay.

Ezekiel tells us that the real job of a prophet is to stand in the gaps of the walls that are broken down, and call the people of God back to repentance. Micah says that it is to declare unto them their sin and transgression. Foretelling of what is to come is not the job of a prophet; it is the consequence of the job. They don't give messages to make you feel comfortable; they give you messages to make you feel uncomfortable. It is a small wonder, then, that real prophets are always despised.

Only in times of severe persecution and affliction, does God send messages of peace and conciliation to encourage and strengthen His people to hold on to His promises. In times of prosperity and relative peace, however, the message is about repentance and coming judgments. Most of what we hear today, however, are messages of prosperity, peace, love, and beautiful things. Severe sentences of judgment are written in the Bible for false prophets that prophesy of Peace when the Lord had not spoken through them.

A wise man loves reproof, Proverbs says. I'd rather have God drag me off to the ol' woodshed any day and scare the Devil out of me, than be appeased by gypsies that weaken my resolve to seek the face of God in fear and trembling.

Meet for the Master's Use

The call to bring revival to a nation is not something that can be accomplished through any strength or wisdom that we possess in ourselves. No matter how badly you want to plunge into the fray and proclaim liberty in the land, the power to bring the presence and power of God that will ignite the Church is not something that can be flippantly learned in Seminary or produced with any carnally designed program. Only God can do that, and only in complete surrender are we able to lend ourselves as crucified vessels that He can work through. Frank Bartleman, in recounting an encounter he had with the Lord, wrote that the Lord told him after he had received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, *"If you were only small enough, I could do anything with you."*

Ah, here's lies the crux, almost a Catch-22 if you would. How does one maintain, or better put, achieve that place of true humility so that God can use you to do His mighty works? On the one hand, we strive to get to that place of righteousness to have power in God while at the same time, try to be stay in that broken, crucified walk in God so we can be yielded to His power. How does one strike that perfect balance? Sounds simple ... or is it?

David had it; Saul did not. Perhaps that was because, for Saul, it was always about Saul. When he was little in his own eyes, he was found hiding amongst the stuff, but a couple years later, he was such a big shot that he didn't think he had to wait on God's prophet. For David, on the other hand, it was never about David; it was always about God. Because of that, he was able to take on Goliath as a kid, and later as an adult with just a couple other guys, the entire Philistine army. (2Samuel 23:9)

Any man of God who has had the power of God work through him will immediately be attacked by the enemy. Whether it is miracle healings, dynamic preaching, or supernatural revelation, no sooner does one experience the touch of God's hand than that little wisp will pass through the back of his mind that, yes it was God's power, but ... ahem ... He did choose to use you! Satan will lightly sneak those thoughts in as subtly as he can. Obviously, if you think about it hard enough, you will recognize the devil's handiwork, so he keeps as light a touch as he can ... and then another ... and then another, merging them ever so slightly into the several streams of your thoughts until he can find an anchor somewhere in your heart to attach his lines of vanity and plant his seeds of pride.

The challenge that faces a man of God who desires to be used in a supernatural way, therefore, lies in how to be “meet for the Master’s use” (2 Timothy 2:21) and yet keep his ego and self completely invisible. God does not bestow His power on just anybody. He may work through anybody, but He is careful to whom He entrusts His power. We must be careful that our desire to be used by God is not rooted in our own self-image or desire for position in God, but entirely upon the promotion of the kingdom of God. As I Corinthians 13 tells us, you can all the faith to move mountains, but if you do not have charity, it is worth nothing.

Easily said; not so easily achieved. Any fool can spout off religious platitudes that boast of unearned righteousness and spirituality, but it is an entirely different matter to fight your way through the spiritual swamp of fleshly ego and pride that you have to negotiate through to arrive at that place where God can use you.

I often hear young Christians naively spout off that they have been called to be a prophet. My first response is to tell them to pray and beg God to change His mind and please choose someone else because you will die a thousand deaths before you enter into that calling.

Ego, pride, and self-awareness must be burned out of you before you are ready to enter into that place of real power. God will give it to you in pieces - just enough to lift you up so He can break you down again. Line upon line, one step at a time, until you gradually become empty of self. Jacob had his Laban, Joseph his prison, and Moses his desert, and you will have your desert place of cauterizing fire to take the "you" out of you so God can fill you up with Himself. His goal is not to change you, but to kill you. You are to be purified into transparent glass so that when people look at you, it is not you that they see, but the fire of God that is in you.

And so with the power that works through you, there is a deep innate understanding that it is not you but God who is working through you to do these miracles. You are nothing but dust and ashes; you don't even own the breath in your body. You are dead in Christ, crucified to the world, numb to pride and arrogance. Any place that Satan could have gotten hold of has been broken away. You have finally surrendered to God.

When you are no longer mindful about yourself or your spiritual place in God - when you just simply do not care anymore - then you are finally "meet for the Master's use" and ready to wield the power of God so that He, and He alone, will get the glory.

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (2 Timothy 2:20,21)

Humility – the breakfast of champions.

Abraham had it when he declared he was nothing but dust and ashes. So did Jacob as he stood before Pharaoh and blessed the most powerful king on earth as a greater would bless a lesser. As a matter of fact, every hero of God had it, but it didn't always look like it.

David had it; Saul did not. Why? Because with Saul, it was always about Saul, but with David, it was always about God. That's why Saul ultimately failed and why David had the boldness as a young boy to stand and mock Goliath and later on, with two of his comrades to stand and defeat an entire army in a field of barley. (1 Chron. 11:13-14)

Moses was the meekest man on earth, but you never saw him wilt before any of the bullies in the congregation. He was too afraid of God to be worried about some puffed up rebels like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Elijah had it. You could hear it in his voice when he stood before the king of Israel and cried about "the Lord God, before whom I stand." He feared God, not the king. It gave him the boldness to call down fire from heaven. And nobody got in his way when he started hacking the priests and prophets of Baal into pieces.

Josiah had it when they had found the lost book of the Law, and in fear and repentance, cleansed the Temple and slaughtered all the sodomites and false idol worshippers. But then he lost it later on when he thought he could take on Pharaoh who was trying to pass through Judah on his way to Babylon.

Peter had to learn it the hard way while John seemed to take to it naturally.

Paul learned it on the road to Damascus. It's what kept him going when he faced the all the beatings and persecution that he went through.

Jesus had it. He was the essence of humility, yet he never backed down from the devil or any of the religious leaders that came against him, even whipping them out of the Temple. His boldness came from his fear of God. Hebrews 5:7 tells us that He "was heard in that he feared". That gave him, not only his power and authority in God, but also his humility.

Humility is meekness toward God, not toward man. It is not a sense of inferiority where we stand hat-in-hand, staring at our shoes while we mumble out weak apologies for our faith. Humility is the power in God that is gained when we step out of ourselves - our flesh, our intelligence, our pride, our idea of who and what we are - and step into the mantle of the Holy Spirit and into the shoes of Christ.

Yes, they are big shoes! And no, you can't fill them in your own power! It is only when you yield completely to the lordship of Christ that you are able to walk in them. That requires a broken, crucified walk in God - crucified unto the world and to yourself, broken from your own selfish pride and desires for recognition, and purged from your own ways until you become an empty vessel of transparent glass. Only then can you be filled with God's power as you become invisible so that He, and He alone, gets the glory.

And with that, you enter into an authority and power in God that is devoid of all flesh so that you may work the works of God in true humility and humbleness of mind.

*"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."
Psalms 57:17*

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James 4:10)

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Just the Time for a Prophet

And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. (1Kings 17:1)

And just when things were getting comfortable!

Everything was going so well. Why does the Lord always seem to send someone to upset the applecart just when we have gotten our lives organized and we don't have to strive as hard anymore? We work hard at packaging up our religion so that it will roll along on automatic. All the hard stuff has been accomplished; all the persecution has been overcome; all the work has been done to get us to this place of security. And now that we have "arrived", we should be able to take it easy for a while.

A friend of mine commented once that people love religion. Why? Because it is so easy! We get to a point where all the hard work is done, and we can rely on the system to make all the decisions now. All we have to do is go to church and be a member in good standing. We do the good works, the canned food drives, and the basket socials. We're covered. We can relax and be raptured. But there is no heart-rending cry to God.

These are the times when the Lord raises up prophets to turn our complacency upside down. As one friend said, they come to comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable. The prophet, as Leonard Ravenhill once said, “is a man who is rejected by other men, even other good men, because they consider him too austere, too severely committed, too negative and unsociable.” They never bring forth the message that we want to hear; only the message that we need to hear. That characteristic is the thing that keeps them from being popular - at least in their lifetime. But that is the thing that makes them popular with God.

Men who fear God fear nothing else. People who are only concerned with what the Lord thinks of them are not concerned with what the world thinks. They can't. They are under an edict from God to tell people the Truth, declare unto Israel their sin, and bring them back to repentance.

The Lord rarely uses someone who is well known and has national prominence. You'd think that, if He did, then people would stand up and take notice. But the Lord raises up prophets out of nowhere so that you will listen to the message, not the messenger.

If there was ever a time we needed one of those old-fashioned prophets of God, it is now. It hasn't rained in a while, and we need an outpouring. Before it rains, however, we, as the people of God, have got to come to that place of repentance before Him and cry out for revival. We need one badly.

This would be just the time for the Lord to send a prophet.

Elijah's Walk in the Desert

And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. (1 Kings 19:7,8)

Three hundred miles, maybe more, depending on how circuitous a route he took and where Mt. Horeb was. Forty days walking. That's a long, lonely walk.

Although prophets of God do not lead normal lives like most people, there can be seen glimpses of our own walks with God in them. You may not have called fire down from Heaven, but every time you stood up against the normal conventions of worldliness to declare the truth of God, you do pretty much the same thing. The world by nature does not like holiness, and it will resist anyone who steps out of the crowd to call it to change. And prophets are considered the worst.

But somebody has to do it, and that's why God calls prophets. They do not possess pleasant personalities and are not the "life of the party". They are not swayed by others' opinions, nor would they be considered "nice guys". Nor do they care.

Everything is black or white to them; there are no shades of grey. It is either righteous or it is sin. And for some reason, they feel compelled to tell you so.

Even if you are the king.

You will not find them in the spotlight of a big ministry receiving the accolades of the crowd. They just don't fit in. The corporate ministries of today are foreign soil to them. They are more suited to wearing camel's hair in the middle of a river than the Brooks Brothers suits and coifed hairdos of this generation's spiritual leaders. And as a result, they walk a lonely path.

Few understand, and fewer appreciate them, and none realize the price.

We think they are made of some kind of steel that doesn't feel the loneliness or the pain of rejection. Since they don't bend to popular attention, we think their hearts are like stones that feel no affinity for others, but the truth is, they are people just like everyone else. They love, they hate, they need, and they feel just like us. They just have to walk a different path and keep on going.

Sometimes it is for three hundred miles with no food or water just to hear the voice of God.

I had a dream many years ago of myself walking in a desert of soft sand, much like the Sahara. Each footstep was difficult as it pushed through the sand. No water, a hot sun, and nothing but sand made it a weariness just to get to the top of the next sand dune and see if the city that I was trying to get to was there. But all there ever appeared was more sand.

I didn't know where I was or if I was heading in the right direction, but I just kept walking, hoping that I wasn't walking in circles. And then I heard a vehicle coming from behind me. A young man with blond hair and a bronze tan drove by in a Dune Buggy, waving to me as he passed by, "Hey, Mr. Garris. I'm off to my ministry! Praise the Lord!". And off he drove over the horizon.

You have to wonder at times like that, what is wrong with me? Why am I here trudging along in this loose desert sand heading seemingly to nowhere, while this young kid is zooming along so effortlessly to his ministry? What did I do wrong? Will I ever reach that city that I am trying so desperately to find?

Do you ever feel like that? Does it seem so simple for others, when everything seems to be a battle for you?

Forty days trudging through the wilderness just to wait in a cave. Make sense to you? I doubt if it did to Elijah either. All that way, then up a mountain to sit in a cave to wait.

First the storm, then the earthquake, and then the fire. But still Elijah waited. And then the still, small voice.

Had Elijah not allowed God to take him through that crucified walk that strips the flesh and breaks the spirit, I don't believe he would have recognized that voice like he did. It would have been just noise, indistinguishable from all the noise of the world.

You may not have to go for three hundred miles without food and water, or stand up against a king to declare a spiritual famine upon the land. You may not call down fire from heaven or raise a woman's dead son, but you possess in your soul the ability to declare the righteousness of God to a worldly church that is mesmerized with an easier, worldly doctrine that mistakes grace for sin and covetousness for prosperity.

You will get the same results as Elijah did and you will go through the same lonely walk as he walked. But know that you are not alone - there are 7,000 that God had reserved - and you are not walking aimlessly. You will finally step over the hill of that last sand dune and see the City that you've been searching for and you will recognize the still, small voice of God as He speaks to you.

"Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Royal Falcons

*“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.
Jeremiah 23:21*

I still remember the name of the gang – the Royal Falcons. We were just kids, young punks on the streets of Jersey, but we thought we were cool – tough guys like the Mafia. “Don’t mess with us ‘cause we’re the Royal Falcons!”

There were gangs in some of the other neighborhoods that we had to deal with, however, and they thought they were just as bad as we thought we were. Depending on which side of town you were in, you had Blacks, the Puerto Ricans, the Italians, and the Jewish kids. If you walked into any of those other neighborhoods, it was war; if they walked into yours, they were fair game. Except for the Jewish kids. They were an easy target, so everyone picked on them. But it was always Us against Them, with Us being the good guys, of course.

I am finding the same thing in our religious landscape today. I am bombarded with prophetic words from the latest Elijah about how God is going to send down judgment on America because we are the Great Whore or Babylon or just plain bad. Especially the churches. Let’s face it, they are the biggest and easiest target, so everybody picks on them.

Honestly, I am beginning to think everybody just wants to spout off so they can feel like they are a prophet with a word from God to point the way. It must feel good because there sure are a lot of them rising up to save the rest of us.

I notice, however, that those who are bringing forth the pronouncements are always the good guys. It's everybody else who are the bad guys.

I don't see it that way. We are "everybody else". It's not someone else's fault - it's ours. It's not a matter of we're the good guys because we can see clearly what the problem with America is. No, we're the bad guys because we can see clearly what the problem with America is, and instead of leading the way to fix it, we just point at everybody else.

The only way to revival and restoration with God is through repentance.

Okay, so who's going to start? Is it going to be the crazy Pentecostals? The emotionless Baptists? The plastic Evangelicals? The idolatrous Catholics? The obsolete Methodists? Or the liturgical Episcopalians? Who? Who is going to start the ball rolling?

How about me? Why not start with me? After all, judgment will begin at the house of God, won't it? Maybe it's not somebody else, but it is me that needs to come to a place of repentance before God and ask Him to please forgive me. Maybe it's my fault, not somebody else's. Maybe instead of pointing at someone else's need to repent, I should lead the way.

After all, that's what Nehemiah and Daniel did.

A Prophets Desire

“But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” 1Ki 19:4

What is it that a real servant of the Lord wants? What is his heart's desire before the Lord? Is it comfort, or fame, or prosperity? Is it a bigger church, or a more expansive ministry? What is it that burns down in the depths of his soul as a seed of hope?

In a day and age where we find huge international ministries and mega-churches, have we somehow lost something in the establishment of our churches? What is it that we are really looking for?

The most obvious answer is that we want to see souls get saved. And just how do we go about getting that? Building a bigger church is the usual answer. But will that really accomplish what we are looking for? Or is that just the establishment of a bigger church?

Elijah was faced with the very essence of this core issue. All Israel had gone after a carnal religion that probably sounded pretty good to the regular guy. There were plenty of priests around, the whole kingdom supported it, and it seemed like the thing to do. But they had long ago left the true worship of God, and no longer recognized the difference.

Elijah was one solitary voice of repentance against a whole nation of Baal worshippers. No one dared side themselves with him, and yet when he stood against the entire religious order on Mount Carmel, the incredible demonstration of the power of God in the form of fire from Heaven validated his righteousness. Did all Israel repent? Not hardly.

And now, here he was in the desert, a hunted man, alone with nowhere else to go. What else could he have done to bring the people to their knees in heart-felt conviction? How do you top something like calling down fire from Heaven?

Elijah's heart cried out for revival, but there was no revival. Not even in the ministry of Elisha, the one who followed him and inherited his ministry. Although the testimony of the Lord stood strong, people's hearts have a way of following their own lusts.

I have learned one thing in the last 33 years of ministry, and that is that people are going to believe what they want to believe - no matter what. And they will use the Bible to justify it. No supernatural miracles, no great works, no inspiring messages will bring about a real change when people have decided to follow after the yearnings of their own heart's desires.

Only the Spirit of the Lord can turn a people around to begin to seek His face. Nothing else will work.

Building bigger churches is oftentimes the result of a very subtle lust for more spiritual power, when all the while the Lord is leading in another direction. It is so easy to think we are pursuing great things in God, when we are actually getting out in front of Him in building our own works. It all sounds so good on the surface, but is that what the Lord is really looking for.

Perhaps, instead of building up huge ministries, we should be heading down on our faces before God. It takes intense prayer and deep repentance to turn a society around, because only the Spirit of God can change hearts. And that takes a people whose heart's desire for revival is stronger than their desire for a bigger church.

Elijah couldn't do it, even with the mighty work that was accomplished on Mount Carmel. But he was a man of effectual, fervent prayer, and left in a chariot of fire leaving the work to God.

Widow Woman of Zarephath

“But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” Luke 4:26

Picture the land of Israel with luscious green valleys, bountiful fields, and flowing brooks. Life is good, and the kingdom is prosperous. Then along comes this rough looking man with a hard, caustic New York attitude who presents himself before the King’s court in all its finery. As he stands there in drastic contrast to the upper crust of their ecclesiastical society, you can hear gasps of shock at his brash boldness.

This man fears no one but God, and levels an ultimatum at the powers-that-be standing before him: “As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.”

He summarily chased out of the King’s court and takes refuge beside a brook where the Lord then tells him to go to a widow woman in Zidon, far from the habitation of the people of God.

We all know the end of the story: the famine that was prophesied in the time of prosperity did come. Along with it came terrible persecution for the real people of God until there were hardly any left. Elijah's words had come true. Even after a final, bloody showdown in Mount Carmel, there was still little evidence of any kind of heartfelt revival. The judgments of God had fallen on a people who had chosen a religious path that was more to their liking than the path that led to the righteousness that God had commanded.

It may be said that Elijah was the 1st prophet to the Gentiles - a foreshadowing of that which was to come - but there is another picture I see here that has replayed itself throughout the history of the people of God. Here we see the time-old story of the dominance of apostate religion and the seeds of true revival.

Flesh always leans toward a religion that comforts the flesh and excuses sin. Every move of God, as it slowly integrates itself into mainstream society, becomes more and more sophisticated and less hard and demanding. Those who are truly of the Lord begin to appear rough, caustic, and out of touch with normal life. They are chased outside the camp to take their ideas of righteousness and the Fear of God elsewhere, while the established religions comfort themselves with the belief that they are doing fine just the way they are.

That little widow woman who sustained the prophet is a picture of the outcast Body of Christ, suffering outside the camp, waiting for the time of restoration. Revival never comes to the established religions - it always comes from outside the camp. God raises up stones to take their place.

Do we see this same picture today? Are there not enough prophecies in the Bible of a spiritual famine and drought just before the Day of the Lord? Have our churches not fallen back into that old, comfortable way of doing things which makes no room for the hard message of the Fear of the Lord, of Hell and Judgment, of sin and righteousness? The Gospel of power that Jesus preached enables us to walk in the Spirit of God so we can overcome sin. The Gospel of peace, prosperity, and love that I hear today in our pulpits has replaced that with the idea of Grace as an excuse for sin.

Multitudes, the Bible says, are in the Valley of Decision right now just before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are making eternal decisions based on whether or not they are satisfied with “church as usual”, or if their souls are desperately hungry for something more. Before that time of restoration arrives, they will have made their decision.

Make no mistake. It is coming. The question is which camp will you be in when it comes?

“...there is a sound of abundance of rain. “ (1 Kings 18:41)

Prophets Reward

“He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward;” Matthew 10:41

What is a “prophet’s reward”?

There are those who feel that if you acknowledge a prophet, you will get to share in his reward. In other words, if you subscribe to their message (and of course, send them money), you get to receive a part of their blessings. Wow! Sounds like a deal to me! It sure makes it easy to get in on that Prosperity that today’s prophets are talking about all the time.

You hear about these prophets all the time. They even introduce themselves as such, as if it was a title. Perhaps we should insert that into the old children’s rhyme,

“Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, Doctor, lawyer, prophet chief.”

Of course, you might point out that it’s already covered with “rich man”, “beggar man”, and “thief”, but “prophet” has a nice ring to it all its own. Besides, “Prophet So-and-so” sounds a whole lot better than “Con Artist So-and-so”.

We’ve got more so-called prophets running around today than there were in Jeremiah’s time, preaching the same message that they were preaching then ... and, I guess, for the same reasons. P.T. Barnum would be proud.

But in Jeremiah's time, there was only one real prophet - Jeremiah. And he didn't spend his time smoothing out people's feathers. He spent most of his time ruffling them. Not a popular guy. And he sure wouldn't fit in today with a Brooks Brothers suit and styled hair-do like we see on TV.

Real prophets expose sin, not console it. They don't preach "peace, peace", when there is no peace; they preach repentance for apostasy and warn of a coming judgment.

So what is a prophet's reward? When you acknowledge a true prophet as having a message from the Throne of God, you get to receive the reproof of the Word of God into your heart. You don't get money. You get something far greater than all the riches of the world. You get to hear the Truth. You get the opportunity get right with God.

But not everybody wants that. Most folks would rather buy into the Success message and get something for nothing rather than (ugh!) pay a price. As if God owes us something because Jesus already paid the price. "Just relax, and be raptured."

Your heart will choose its own way if you let it, and people are absolutely in love with their own opinions, but truths are revealed to broken hearts that intelligent minds cannot grasp. Brokenness is the way of the Cross; peace and prosperity is the way of false prophets.

Pick your prophets carefully. You will end up in the same place as those whom you follow.

The Making of a Prophet

Jeremiah was called right in the midst of the great revival during Josiah's reign. Everything looked so good - on the surface. Everybody that was anybody was going to church, they had just had the greatest Passover since the days of Joshua, and nobody was looking for messages of "doom and gloom". All the so-called prophets of the time were foretelling of peace, prosperity, and good things. Life was good. They were filled with prosperity, and danger seemed a long way off.

"You want me to tell them WHAT?"

No matter how much Jeremiah squirmed, God was not taking excuses. The severe prophesies and judgments that God gave to Jeremiah to deliver may not have made sense to the carnal mind, but God had a different perspective, and could see past the surface into people's hearts. He told Jeremiah that either he told these people what he was told to tell them, or God was going to break Jeremiah down in front of everybody. He was going to do it, or else.

You know what? Jeremiah did it. And he did it for the next 30 or so years, all the while knowing how few would believe him. He was mocked, persecuted, ignored, and thrown in the bottom of a well. But he told them. He didn't do it because he understood the grand scheme of things or how everything fit together -- he did it because he knew it was the truth. He did it because he feared God more than he feared public opinion.

Ezekiel and the Prophets

“And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.” Ezekiel 22:28

It sounds like the people in Ezekiel’s day, just like today, had the same kind of prophets that we have today.

And ol’ Zeke had the unenviable job of exposing them for what they really were. No one likes to hear that his precious beliefs are wrong, but what else was Ezekiel supposed to do? Just grin and bear it when God was breathing fire down his neck?

I wonder if you could hear a sigh come out of Ezekiel every time he got a word from the Lord, knowing that he would be hated for the things that God had commanded him to bring forth. Let’s face it, it’s a lot easier to hate someone who is telling you to repent than it is to hate God for making him tell you, so Ezekiel had to know that he was going to catch the brunt of the people’s ill will.

It's a tough job being a real prophet because their whole purpose in life is to tell you the very thing that you don't want to hear. The false prophets have it easy - they get all the praise and accolades for making everyone feel good. I'll bet they get plenty of tithes too. Maybe that's why they choose to mollify their messages with all that warm and fuzzy stuff about how we're such "fair-haired boys" in God's eyes. Like good salesmen, they only tell you what they know you want to hear.

There are thousands of them out there, running around like gypsy fortune-tellers, telling people all sorts of wonderful, encouraging words to make them feel good. Like "Home on the Range", there is seldom a discouraging word to be heard.

And as a result, there is no repentance. And therefore no forgiveness.

Neither is there any persecution. (At least not for them.)

Today, we even have schools that will teach you how to be a prophet. Boy, does that sound cool! Just think, for a hundred bucks you can be the first on your block to be a prophet of God! I wonder if you can get a diploma to hang on your wall so everyone knows that you've been certified.

But I always tell young people who think they've been called to be a prophet to hurry up and ask God if they can get their money back. Maybe you can make God to change His mind before it's too late, because to be a real prophet of God, not only will you die a thousand deaths before you get there, nobody's going to like you very much when you do.

But then, maybe I'm just old-fashioned. Maybe all you have to do is stick your hand in the air and go with whatever puff of wind that happens to come along. If it feels good, just say it!

Yeah, the old-time prophets had it tough. Their job was to stand in the gaps and declare unto the people of God their sins and transgressions and call them back to God through brokenhearted repentance - which of course is not what people want to hear. That's why there are so few of them (the real ones, that is).

Most people will follow their hearts, but a wise man loves reproof.

"The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools." Ecclesiastes 9:17

Sons of Sceva

“Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.” Acts 19:13

It always sounds so easy. Just say the words, clap your hands twice, click your heels, and kazaam!

I am so tired of hearing that all we have to do is speak positive words and it will bring life or blessings or healing or whatever we are trying so desperately to believe. But that isn't faith talking; that's presumption. Motivational speakers like Zig Ziglar may sound inspiring and fill you with neat sayings that make you feel good, but that doesn't make them prophets of God. The power of positive thinking does not equate to the power of the blood of Jesus.

Those sons of Sceva in the above chapter of Acts saw all the miracles that Paul did and naturally figured that if they did the same things and said the words that they would get the same results. Except they were missing the one thing that made all the difference - the power that only comes through a crucified walk before God in deep, broken subjection to the Spirit of God. Everyone wants to be a prophet, but no one wants to pay the price.

Instead we grasp for shortcuts in our lives. We hypothesize. Just say the words, and it will come to pass. "This will be your year of blessings and prosperity ..." Oh, wait a minute. Didn't we hear that *last* year? And the year before?

Or how about this? "Call those things which be not as though they were ..." And so we run around speaking things into the air to make them happen. But that's not faith either; that is sorcery. You go to Hogsworth to learn that.

Faith has to be built (Jude 1:20); it is not wished into being. And there is a price for it, just as there is a price for everything in God. Anything other than that is just wishful thinking and will not produce lasting and full results. Every great man or woman of God had their 40 years in the backside of a desert before they were ever brought forth by God to exercise His power.

Ah, but that's not what we want to hear, is it? We want everything to be quick 'n' easy in our microwave society. Snap your fingers and be healed!

And the demon taunted back to the sons of Sceva, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

He knew who Paul was. I'm sure Paul was famous in hell. Why? Because Paul, unlike Sceva's lightweight sons, had paid the price in blood, tears, and prayer. He had stormed the gates of hell armed with a faith that had been built one block at a time, and he had declared victory in the blood of Jesus Christ over everything Satan had thrown at him. Oh yes, that demon knew who Paul was ... and he feared.

But empty words of presumption based on a theological faith without any suffering, blood, or effort will not turn back the tides of darkness. Faith is built one precept at a time, and power in God is brought forth out of the crucified depths of prayer. There is a price for power in God, and it is not cheap or easy.

That is why we see so many false prophets running around the church today, like Pied Pipers declaring all the things that our itching ears want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). Our church world has become little more than a revolving social circuit of entertaining speakers speaking great swelling words of encouragement to a church that instead is in desperate need of repentance. Instead of bringing us into the fear of the Lord, they are leading us in the power of positive thinking. In doing so, are leading us away from the altar of repentance which is the one place we need to be in order to see revival.

“For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” 1 Corinthians 4:20

Surprise

“And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” Isaiah 25:7

Picture this for a moment. World opinion has moved against Israel to the point that she has become a burdensome stone for the entire world. The only hope that world leaders have for a lasting peace is to subjugate Israel and force her to bend to their decrees of submission.

Israel doesn't want to do that. They flat out refuse. So the world press paints a picture of Israel as a rebellious, renegade nation that, in the eyes of the world, makes Israel look like such a serious threat to world peace that she must be forcibly crushed.

The armies of the world join to surround and destroy her. Crowds cheer as they read that half of Jerusalem has been taken in ferocious fighting. The Jews' back is against the wall, the Death Knell has begun to ring, and victory is at hand.

And then, surprise, surprise! Jesus Christ splits the skies and descends to fight for His people in a fury that the world has never known and will never forget.

Oops!

Now they know. But how had they become so blinded?

According to the Scriptures, it is because they listened to their prophets. They had been convinced that they were executing a righteous cause in the name of Peace. They had chased all the old-fashioned preachers from the pulpits because they didn't bring messages of peace and love, and the prophets that had called for the righteous indignation of the Lord were considered mean, divisive, and judgmental.

Didn't those hellfire and brimstone preachers understand that the only way to peace was to accept all religions into an ecumenical World Religion? Didn't those hateful prophets understand that God was Love and all those divergent lifestyles were just a different way of approaching God? Why were they preaching Hate?

Well, I guess the only real answer I can give is because it was the Truth.

Real prophets of God are not nice guys - they aren't supposed to be. And if my Bible is correct, they never appeared to be real high on whatever the religious order of the day was. And some of them were pretty nasty about it. But Preachers of courage divide between sin and righteousness, and will suffer persecution as a result of it. (*"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* 2Timothy 3:12)

Just in case you're wondering which side God is on - He hates sin ... and He hates the workers of iniquity (Psalms 5:5). Pick your side ... but choose wisely.

One only has to read the newspapers to see the march of radical individualism and humanism along with unrestrained Liberalism moving us into the free licentiousness of Sodom and Gomorrah. And it's considered a godly and loving thing! Boy, are we suckers.

But it's all because we have chosen our own delusions, and we have allowed our prophets of peace and love to sell us a candy-coated gospel that seems so ...um ... nice. This is the hour of temptation that will come to try the whole world.

It would be so easy to say that the way to see through this deception is to simply read and pray. However, if that is not mixed with the fear of God, your understanding will be superficial at best. Unfortunately, the fear of God is gradually being relegated to a four-lettered word and translated to the more acceptable "reverence" and "respect" instead of that "trembling" stuff or that "dread" that is written in the old King James.

But when that covering is cast away, we will see Him as He really is.

And then we will know.

The Harvest is Past

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” (Jer 29:11)

I am always amazed at how we can pluck a snippet of Scripture out of a passage and completely ignore the surrounding context so we can reinforce the consolations that we long for. How many times have we heard this scripture in reference to the blessings that God has in store for us? We strain our ears to hear anything that will lean toward the wonderful things that we yearn to hear, and applaud the teachers that we have heaped up to soothe our itching ears. Oh, how wonderful are our messages of peace that our prophets have consoled us with!

And yet, the substance of the Word of the Lord that carries these snippets of Scripture often brings a much different message than what we want to hear.

Jeremiah was called to prophesy unto Israel in the 13th year of Josiah’s reign. It was a message of woe and repentance, of judgment to come and Holy Ghost conviction for rebelling against the Lord. Five years later, Josiah discovered the scrolls and instituted a great revival in the land, but Jeremiah still continued his message of judgment and repentance.

I can imagine the resistance from the Jews of the time. Couldn't this old judgmental prophet see how wonderful their churches were? Why did he not understand that they were in a time of revival? Surely his dark message of repentance no longer applied to them, but this caustic old prophet just wouldn't let go of his old ways. He must not be of God, because, Praise the Lord, we're all saved and praising the Lord now. There's no need to repent.

The Lord has taken me through the first 25 chapters of Jeremiah over and over and over. He won't let me leave. Each time I go over them again, I see more clearly an overlay of a picture of America and her modernistic churches. I hear the same cry from God for repentance for the sin and apostasy that we have left in our wake for years, but instead of hearing cries of repentance, I hear the same calls for peace and prosperity that Jeremiah heard from the false prophets of his day.

As the chapters in Jeremiah progress, there is an increased call from God to repent until there finally comes a point where it is too late. And still, issuing from the mouths of the prophets and priests of the time is a flood of prophecies of peace and prosperity: 'God will never forsake His people, but will return and establish them'. 'Surely God will bless us as we practice our religious ways.' 'God is Love and He would never send destruction upon us.'

Today's prophets tell us the same messages. And yes, the message of repentance does carry with it the promise of restoration ... IF we repent. But just as the people of God in Jeremiah's time could not see the need to repent, even so we in our modern churches emphasize praise and worship, but turn our hearts from the harder messages of repentance to the extent that we will even pluck scriptures as cameo examples of proof that judgment will not come upon us.

But it will come. And though God deal with us long and plead with us repeatedly -- and yes, even promise us blessings if we will just hearken to His warnings -- nevertheless, judgment is determined upon this land for our refusal to acknowledge our departure from the old ways of holiness and the fear of God and our migration to a new Gospel of peace and love. As Leonard Ravenhill once said that we have Hollywood productions instead of holiness. And Jeremiah said, "... and my people love to have it so."

And the great stone wheel of judgment continues to roll ever closer.

The blood of 50 million innocents cries out of the ground of their murder for the sake of adulterous convenience.

One denomination after another has decreed that the abomination of homosexuality is righteous while our government has decreed that the demonstration of anything godly is against the law. The translations of God's Word have devolved into comic book renditions and paraphrases of the Scriptures that God says we are supposed to tremble at. There is a dearth of a flowing of the Spirit of God in our services, complete absence of miracles, and altars that are bare. We sing and we dance, but do not travail in prayer. As Amos says, we lie upon beds of ivory, but our hearts are not grieved for the affliction of the lost.

Our hearts are not cut for these things, neither do we acknowledge our sin, but instead look to our prophets for messages of peace, love, blessings, and prosperity. We do not believe that God will send destruction upon us, for we are like the woman with a whore's forehead - we refuse to be ashamed. (Jer. 3:3) We wipe our lips and say, "I have done no wickedness." (Prov. 30:20) "... No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" (Jer. 8:6)

Judgment is determined upon America. Destruction is on the way that will be far greater than 9/11 or Katrina. Your prophets have told you that God will spare us and send revival, but it will not come without broken-hearted repentance. The question is, will we repent? Or will we cross the same line that Israel crossed in Jeremiah where it is too late and God will no longer listen? Will we not wake up to our spiritual leprosy until we are carried away to Babylon? Or will we wake up at all?

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” (Jeremiah 8:20)

Despise not Prophecyings

“Despise not prophecyings.” 1 Thess.5:20

Ever wonder about that scripture? Why did the Apostle Paul have to exhort the Thessalonians not to despise prophecyings?

I used to figure that maybe it was an admonishment to keep your heart open to receive reproof or strong direction when it comes. So often, we have a tendency to believe only the things that we want to believe. We are not always open to correction or change.

As I read it this morning, however, I saw a church planted right smack in the middle of an area that had seen its share of wild and crazy stuff – and I mean church stuff. Having seen Paul do many wonderful miracles in Ephesus, Thessalonica, Philippi, and throughout that whole region, the Greeks got pretty excited with this new religion. It had power! What a novel idea!

Well, it stands to reason that, if Paul can cast out devils, heal the sick, bestow the Holy Ghost and do all these miracles, then so could they. And many of them proceeded to jump right into this new exciting religion with both feet and try to do just that.

Unfortunately, many of them discovered the hard way that the gifts of the Spirit of God can't be flipped on like some switch. Neither the devil nor God is impressed with bravado, presumption, or pride. There is a price to pay if you want power in God, and it is a price that is always higher than what human flesh expected. And it always takes longer than what you had believed.

But many of these young Greeks hadn't learned many of those lessons yet, and were expecting everything to be supernatural all of a sudden. I'm sure that many of them thought that they were called to be part of the new generation of holy prophets. Nothing new there. That's still going on today. Why I have even heard that we've got some school here that teaches you how to be a prophet! Isn't that cute!

It's just plain trouble when you let some inexperienced young zealot loose thinking that he's a prophet. Not only is he susceptible to every wind of doctrine that Satan throws at him, but also pride begins to enter into his heart and he becomes no longer open to reproof. The next thing you know, whatever dumb idea enters his heart must be from God. Those that listen to him simply because it sounds so good, will inevitably be led away into heresy and, ultimately, sin and the destruction of the church.

You can usually tell the difference right off the bat. Prophets called of God preach repentance; False Prophets preach of peace and safety. Figure it out.

It sounds to me like the Thessalonians had had their fill of self-proclaimed prophets coming into their churches with their nonsense, their exalted and affected voices, and their spiritual attitudes. They were ready to toss them out on their spiritual butts. And yet, Paul reminds them, don't despise prophesyings just because of some puffed-up heretics. God still does use flesh to bring forth His Word. But it has to be flesh that has allowed itself to be crucified, stripped down, emptied out, and beaten until it is void of self, ego, and emotions.

There are some prophets out there like that, but they are far and few between. There's a price tag on that calling that is just too high to pay for most church people, so you don't find too many that are willing to take on that course of action.

Another reason why there are so few genuine prophets of God is that no one wants to hear their message. Everybody wants to hear about the blessings, peace, love, and pleasant things. Oh, and don't forget about prosperity and money! But please don't tell us about having to give all these things up for the Kingdom of God's sake. Please don't tell us that we have to not only repent, but stay in that place of repentance. Please tone down the messages about the Fear of the Lord, about Hell, and Holy Ghost conviction. We don't mind being called Christians; we just don't want to get that serious. And we sure don't want to get that much on fire!

Despise not prophesyings. Forget the light and vain prophets of the wind that infest our churches today with their messages of chaff. Cling to those old warriors who stand up in the authority and power of God Almighty, and deliver the same message they always have.

Talk is Cheap

“Thus saith the Lord God; woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!” Ezekiel 13:3

About now, I’m sure you’ve had your fill of all the prophesies for this new year. This is going to be the year that God is going to do this and do that, move here and move there. This is the year of your deliverance, of your blessing, of whatever it is that you have been waiting for. This is the year. Hang on; here it comes.

Funny. Weren’t those the same things we heard last year? And the year before? Ah, but this is a new year, so we get to hear them all over again. (Sigh) If these were about secular things, we’d call these people con artists. But no, this is in the Church, so we call them prophets.

There is a real danger in these kinds of prophesies of peace. I understand that we all want to encourage the Church to be edified and to strengthen our faith, but is this the word from the Lord or is it a ploy to bring us into a false sense of security and to weaken our defenses?

According to Ezekiel, false prophets only serve to keep the people of God from repentance by deceiving them into thinking that all is well between them and God. Their message is always the same - God loves you and is going to shower you with all your hopes and dreams. Everything is wonderful. Relax and be raptured.

It would be nice if all we had to do is sit back and watch God do all the work, but that's not how it reads in His Word. Just as Israel broke her covenant with God in becoming worldly, so we have fallen far from the great calling in God that we once had. Do we still have it? Well, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, to be sure, but that calling also cries out for us to walk deeply in the Spirit of God to receive it. And that we have lost. We say we do, but take a look at the on-fire Christians of just a couple of generations ago who prayed and fasted their guts out for lost souls, and you will be sorely embarrassed. No, all we do is talk.

I get tired of reading emails, essays, and mini-messages about how God is going to send a great move of the Spirit to us and call the Church back to a glorious revival. Sorry, but after a while, it all sounds like just so much white noise. Talk, talk, talk.

Talk is cheap. Even the Bible says so. (Pro 14:23) When are we actually going to do something besides talk?

No revival comes without repentance. Not only personal repentance, but corporate repentance for the whole Body of Christ. And that takes prayer – real hard, contending prayer, the kind of desperate prayer that breaks through the heavens and grabs hold of the Throne of God. That kind of prayer will bring us closer and closer to His holiness, and the closer we get, the more our sinful nature stands out in sharp contrast.

The kind of Holy Ghost conviction that we need to birth a true outpouring is the kind that will break you. Knees will crack, hearts will break, and tears will flow. I'm not talking about poetic analogies – I'm talking about a broken-hearted repentance that is so piercing that it will change your life forever.

Lenoard Ravenhill once said that God hears desperate prayer. He must have gotten that from Elijah, a man who was just like us, but a man who knew what righteous, fervent effective prayer could do. Elijah was a rainmaker. If you want it to rain, you will have to pray like Elijah.

Anything short of that is just talk.

Built On Sand

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. “ (Mathew 7:22-27).

I've got some exciting news for everybody! I just heard that God is going to crash down on Arizona and pour out a fantastic revival there first before spreading it out to the rest of America. And guess what? Because He hasn't come in the time appointed, He is going to pour out an extra portion on them. (He must've been busy and lost track of time.) At least that's what some newly risen-up prophets are telling us.

But hey, wait a minute! Isn't that the same thing I just heard about Kansas City? And St. Louis? And let's not forget about all the prophecies about the revival starting first here in Dallas. (Be the first on your block to experience a revival in your town!)

Okay, guys. C'mon now. This is a trick, isn't it? Or is this like campaigning to get the Olympics to come to your city next year. Or is it more like the circus is coming to town - everybody hoop and holler! Bring out the clowns!

Somebody has got to be pulling my leg.

No, unfortunately, these prophets are all serious, and that's what makes it so scary. Of course, they have thousands of followers because everybody wants to hear what they want to hear - they just don't want to pay the price to get it. How much easier to latch on to some self-proclaimed prophet that will appeal to your itching ears!

But the houses that they are building are all built upon sand.

They remind me of the prophets in Jeremiah's time that told the people that, because God loved them so much, He would drive the Babylonians away. But Jeremiah, the lone prophet who cried for repentance, was left standing in the rubble when it was all over.

What I have trouble understanding is why. Why is this much-touted outpouring is coming first to your city? Tell me why you are so special? Why would God pour it out on you?

In the face of almost 50 million abortions, rampant tolerance of homosexuality, expulsion of God from our schools and government, and the mediocrity of our churches, I find little to line up with the requirements that God has set in His Word to have a revival. The blueprint for revival can be clearly seen in the Book of Joel, but I don't see much evidence of it in our churches today.

We are enamored with ourselves, but the Word of God calls for broken hearts. We tout our blessings and prosperity, but God calls for repentance. We say that we are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, but God says we are wretched and miserable, poor and blind, and naked. We watch causally as the lost wander past our church doors with no intention of coming in because they are afraid that they will become like us, but we are not cut to the heart.

We honor God with our lips, but our hearts are far from Him ... and the fear of God is taught by precept only. (Isaiah 29:13)

But hey, it is so good to hear that we are going to experience a great revival anyway!

We are not building our house upon the Rock; we are building it upon the sands of our own mesmerizing wishful thinking. There is price to pay for any move of God, but we are hoping to bypass that and win the Revival Lottery.

I hope you have better luck than the Jews did in Jeremiah's time.

Change

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;” (1st Thessalonians 1:5)

I have been traveling across Africa for the past 15 years. During that time, I have preached in over 1,000 churches and spoken to tens of thousands of people. One of the recurring complaints I keep hearing is that Americans are no longer preaching the same message that they brought to them 50 years ago. I have heard that a hundred times if I have heard it once, and I have heard it from Kenya to Nigeria.

We used to preach about righteousness and holiness in the fear of God. Grace was the power that God gave us to overcome sin, the flesh, and the world. The formula was simple – “fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Eccl. 12:13), and Grace gave us the power to do that.

Today, the focus of Modern Christianity is different, as are the definitions of the words we use. We are more “grace-oriented”, as one mega-preacher put it, and our emphasis is on the love of God rather than on His wrath. Today, grace has become more of a covering for sin than a cure for it. The sharp lines of judgment have been blurred to the point that no one is really sure any longer of who is saved and who is not. We now accept all denominations and all religions without prejudice because, after all, who are we to judge?

In 50 years, we have changed the basic tenets of the Gospel more than they have in generations. Those in today's Modern Church who see this change applaud it as enlightening. The younger generation, who never experienced the power of the old fashioned Gospel, are not aware of the difference and so have whole-heartedly accepted this new Modern Gospel as if it has been the standard for all time.

But there's more missing than just a change of focus. The power is gone. So are the miracles. Our sermons are now "in word only" with 5 bulleted points and a video clip, whereas they used to be delivered under the Anointing that pierced the depths of your soul. You used to be able to feel the tangible power and presence of the Holy Spirit like a cloud of glory. Now, we forget the message five minutes after we cross the threshold. We have traded the guts of the Gospel for an increase in sophistication and scholasticism, a fruit that is "desired to make one wise".

The Africans can see this clearly. They wonder why we cannot. Perhaps it is because we don't want to, but instead, like the Church of Laodicea in Revelations, have chosen the golden calves at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

When and how did this change happen? I believe things began changing in the 1960's. Starting in 1964 with Billy Graham's admitted shift in his messages (Christianity Today, April 2018, "*Sinners in the Hands of a Loving God*") and the ecclesiastical changes in some of the older denominations, the tide of the Church began to turn. Fifty years later, the direction the messages have taken has fully changed. The truth is that 2,000 years of Gospel was upended in 50 years.

Today, Jonathan Edwards, Billy Sunday, A.W. Tozer, and many other giants would not be welcome in today's church. They were too harsh; too judgmental; too strict; too hateful. That which was good is now considered evil, and that which was apostate, is now considered blessed.

The encouraging thing, however, is that today's climate is very much like it often is just before God sends revival. There will be prophets to declare the old-fashioned fear of God - and they will be rejected - but there will be those who are hungry for something more than "church as usual". Their hunger for the real power and presence of God will drive them to their knees, and that is what will bring revival.

*"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil;
that put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
(Isaiah 5:20)*

Avatars

It amazes me how many self-proclaimed prophets there are out there today. We used to coin the term “avatars of God” back in the 60’s and 70’s for people who thought they received special messages from heaven to give to the rest of us. They expected people to receive these words at their specially anointed hands just as if they had come from God himself.

I just came back from visiting someone who, initially, seemed to be filled with the excitement for the Lord, and had established a place that he had said was doing wonderfully. Closer inspection, however, revealed something quite different. He was just another one of these “avatars” with a special message that no one had ever heard before. And woe unto us if we did not receive it with fear! It scared me all right - enough to run out of there as fast as my legs could carry me.

How many times has the Word of God warned us of false leaders and false prophets that would raise themselves up in these last tumultuous days to gather people around them to hear some new message that they had received from God? They sound exciting, but although they pronounce that they, for some reason, are the only ones that have this new revelation from God, it's just the same old story. They set themselves up as intermediaries between us and God to tell us some new doctrine that God has whispered in their ear, and admonish us that if we don't follow them, we will be lost. Where does the Bible tell us that God will ever raise up some man to receive great new revelations from God that no one has heard before? There is no such gospel.

God raises up servants, not Avatars. The ones that the Lord does raise up to lead His people are tried and tested servants of God that will only bring forth that which is already written in the Word of God, not some "new" thing to excite our imaginations. He says to "ask for the old paths, where is the good way" and commands us to test the spirits with the tried and true Word of God.

There's a pile of them out there, and the number of them is growing. Be very careful. The coming of the year 2000, Y2K, and the new global mentality of a "New World Order" certainly excite the religious imagination, and we do have a tendency choose our own deceptions, but it's the simplicity of the Gospel that wins men's souls. If there was ever a time to walk circumspectly, it is now.

Stick to the basics. You can't go wrong with the basics. I don't care how good these "Avatars from God" sound. Nothing sounds as good as the Truth.

A New Generation

“Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up; to make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.” Jeremiah 18:15,16

I have always believed that the Book of Jeremiah is a perfect reflection of the times we are living in right now. The same things that Jeremiah saw in his day can be seen today.

Back then, Jeremiah had to face a people who had come out of a superficial revival that had been held while Josiah was alive and tell them that unless they returned to God, evil and destruction would surely come. They didn't believe him because it wasn't the message that they wanted to hear.

There was no cry for repentance or judgment. Everyone felt that since they were the people of God and had a show of religion that God must surely love them, so they flocked to the light and vain prophets that rose up that prophesied of prosperity and peace. That was the message that they wanted to hear, not this old-fashioned message of repentance and the fear of the Lord, and judgment to come.

Since there were so many of these false prophets all saying the same thing, it was easy to believe that good times were coming and that Jeremiah was just a cranky, old prophet that didn't believe in Love. Another old prophet put it succinctly, "Tell us smooth things. Prophesy unto us deceits" "*...and my people love to have it so.*"

It was the same judgment that had been spoken to the Israelites of Gideon's time also. They had allowed themselves to be taken in with a worldly worship and, as a result, had been taken over by their enemies. Their land that should have brought forth a harvest was taken from them, and they were left a persecuted and scattered people. The desolation was so great that Gideon had to thresh his wheat in secret.

Gideon's answer to the angel who visited him echoes today. If God is with us, then tell me where are all His miracles and deliverance? What happened to the power of God that our fathers have told us about?

The answer was simple - you didn't hearken to the prophets that God sent you who warned you not to mix with the vanities of this world, you thought this was a new, more sophisticated time and that you didn't need that old-fashioned message any more, you would only listen to those light prophets of peace and blessings, and you would not hearken to a message that you did not want to hear.

The same situation has repeated itself over and over throughout time, and we are seeing it again today...with the same results.

God will give us a certain space of time to repent, but we will refuse. Why should we repent? Our pastors and prophets have all told us that we are all just so beautiful and filled with love that we don't have to. As it says in Revelations, "...thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

We have burnt incense to vanity and refused to walk in the old paths, therefore God will raise up a new generation of believers who want much more than "church as usual" and who will be willing to fight for it.

There is something interesting about what Gideon was told to do. He had to sacrifice the 2nd bullock, not the 1st one. There is something about that that tells me that God will raise up a new generation, not the old established one, to bring about a new move of God. It will be new winebottles that will hold a new wine that the established religious order will not be able to handle.

The move of God will pass us by, and God will raise up stones in our place. Look for it, for it will surely come.

The Old Prophet

“Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers” 2 Chronicles 20:33

Just the other day, I was asked a surprising question by an old prophet of God who had had a dramatic ministry throughout his life, filled with extraordinary moves of God, healings and miracles, and true revivals where thousands of souls were saved through his preaching. He wondered what happened to the outpourings of the Holy Spirit that had once been so common not that long ago.

Here was a man who knew what the power of God was like, and yet, no matter where he looked, that powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit seemed to have evaporated from our religious landscape. The ministers he spoke to who stood in the pulpits today had never experienced first-hand what those old Holy Ghost services were like, and as a result, could never quite grasp what he was talking about.

Oh sure, we've all heard the stories, but how many of us know what it was like to feel the pulsating charge of the Spirit of God as it lit up the entire church and lifted the congregation to another world? How many of us can testify to seeing the piles of discarded crutches left outside the tent revival's door? Where were we when, night after night, the altars were packed with lost souls crying out to God for Salvation, overwhelmed with the presence of the glory of God?

I had been part of that once, and so had he, but where could you go to find anything like that today? It has been so long since we've had that kind of outpouring that even our preachers have forgotten what it was like -- if they ever knew. What's worse, they have begun to think that the anemic church they now have is normal, and that what was experienced back then was abnormal.

Think I'm kidding? Just a few weeks ago, I listened to a guest preacher in an Assemblies of God church in Maypearl, Texas actually mock those old Holy Ghost preachers! How far have we come from what we once were!

The old prophet I spoke to had a hard time understanding how the church had fallen so far away in such a short time. The definition of the Fear of God has been watered down so much that it is now simply "reverence" and not the "fear and trembling" stuff that fueled those old brush arbor revivals. Our church leaders have dismissed those who once stood in the awesome authority and power of God, and have instead emphasized a new gospel of love and blessings, which is a lot more fun to listen to

... and we wonder what happened.

What will it take to get back to a time of miracles? What must we do in preparation for another move of God?

There are those who believe we will have a “breakthrough” if we sing songs and celebrate with praises, but those old-timers will tell you that there will be no revival without broken, repentant hearts and a willingness to crucify our ways to submit to holiness in the fear of God. They should know -- they had it; we don't.

But when will that happen?

As I look out, I see the same things Jehoshaphat saw – a people that have not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers, and cannot see the difference.

Be sure, revival is coming just as it is written – just as soon as we repent and prepare our hearts to do it God's way.

Obadiah's Choice

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. (1 Kings 17:1)

A reflection of the last days can be seen in this chapter in Elijah's life. Israel had forsaken the true faith of their fathers for an idolatrous religion that was pressed upon them by Ahab's marriage to Jezebel - a satanic union of church and state. The land seemed to flourish in prosperity that was undoubtedly attributed to this new religion of Baal. Baal, or course, is the god of love who preaches a kinder, gentler gospel message than that old, stern and judgmental Jehovah and is more in tune with the pleasures of the world. Satan's job is not to try to convince us that sin is not sin, but rather that we can get away with sin because God will always forgive us, understand our human failings and cover our sin with His love. That is the god of Baal, and that is precisely why the people loved Baal and hated the prophets of God.

How like today! We have a form of godliness, but we have denied the power thereof because we have pulled away from the holiness and fear of God that our grandfathers preached to us. We denigrate the old Brush Arbor revivals, and then wonder why the modern church is so anemic. But although we are disenchanting with the old message, we still adhere to the idea of Jesus ... we just manufactured it into a different form that has an uncanny resemblance to the golden calves at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

Elijah was chased to the Brook Cherith to be fed by the ravens until the brook dried up. Every morning and every evening the birds came to sustain him. I'm not sure how Elijah felt about being fed these delicacies from birds, but this is certainly not the same picture that we see in how today's ecclesiastical royalty is being served. But then, neither are they the type of preachers that we would expect to march into Ahab's throne room and tell him that he is going to Hell.

When there was no sustenance left in Israel, Elijah is sent out of the country to Zidon. When there is no more movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church, God will start moving outside it. Elijah meets a widow in the gate of the city. Why the gate and not the well or somewhere nondescript? I don't know, but the gate of the city was always the place of judgment. Perhaps there is a message there, but at any rate, he sends her off for some food and water with a pronouncement from God that He will sustain them ... not lavishly, perhaps, but God will sustain them for 3-1/2 years.

This is a picture of the church in the last days - a shell of her former self, outside the denominational structure, in the shadow of the Jezebel Whore of Revelations, with just enough of the meal of the Word of God and the oil of the Spirit to sustain herself through this time of spiritual famine. One day at a time. There was only enough for them to be sustained by the faith that God would keep them for one more day. I don't know how bad the end times will be, but both Jesus and Daniel said that it would be worse than anything the world has seen since the beginning of time. That seems to match the picture we see here in Zarephath.

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity...” (Isaiah 26:20-21)

When the day of reckoning finally came, Elijah was sent to Obadiah to call Ahab. God could have sent him directly to Ahab, but He didn't. He used Obadiah. In Obadiah, we see a picture of yet another church in the last days, but this one is not the oppressed church of the Widow of Zarephath, but of a worldly church that is still attached to the kingdom of this world. Yes, Obadiah hid the prophets from Jezebel's wrath, but he never disassociated himself from Ahab. Out of his own mouth he confessed that Ahab was still his lord. Here is the compromised church hanging onto its weakness for prosperity and comfort, not willing to stand up and challenge the sin and unrighteousness of the worldly system that they are part of and not willing to leave it for the scarcities of the desert. It is this Obadiah that God chooses to engage in this last great challenge between the prophet and the king.

The story of Mount Carmel is rich with imagery - the water, the fire, the judgment, and the sound of abundance of rain, all of which would be better served in another article - but it is the picture of the two churches that concerns me here. I hear talk of the "triumphant church", of the great things to come and how we will move into the greatest Church Age that we have ever seen. I have even heard that the wealth of the sinners will be laid up for the just and so thereby transferred over to us and we will get rich. Why do we so desperately hang on to this? Is it because we can no longer see the world for what it really is? Have we become an Obadiah church, touting our "good works" as an excuse for our compromise with the world, and in doing so have aligned ourselves with Ahab, even calling him lord and are unwilling to make an stand for truth and righteousness?

Perhaps God, in His incredible mercy, will allow the Church to be engaged again in the last showdown between the Spirit of Elijah and the Church of Baal. Not all is well with the Church, nor will it ever be as long as we retain our worldliness and refrain from reproofing the world of its sin. There will be some hard choices to be made in that day. When Elijah stood alone on top of Mount Carmel, where was Obadiah? Do we fear, as did Obadiah, to confront the world and take a stand against a false religion of love, peace, and prosperity in the face of lust, sin, and covetousness?

God in His mercy may yet engage the Church in these last days, but I believe it will be more to sift her with the “sieve of vanity” (Isaiah 30:28). The choices we will face will not only be hard, but it will seem radical and extreme. It will be a solitary stand against that which seems to be normal, but it is a choice that we will have to make nonetheless.

Blow the Trumpet in Zion

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, Zion.

Sound an alarm in my holy mountain...”

What an exciting song. We sing it with great gusto, but what does the rest of the passage in the Book of Joel have to say? What is this “alarm” all about?

Throughout the Prophets, and even in the Gospels and epistles, we see warnings of a time of spiritual desolation coming upon the earth. In this century, we have seen exciting moves of God in many places around the world, and within the grasp of our memories, is the evidence of what it is like to see an outpouring of the Spirit of God. Just a couple of generations ago, our churches were burning with a vibrancy that is still talked about today. Ask some of these old-timers what the Brush Arbor Revivals were like, and you can watch their eyes light up as they begin to tell you.

In the last 30 or 40 years, we’ve had a lot of good churches, but very few good revivals. Are we living in the time that the old prophet Joel spoke about when the corn, the wine, and the oil have been withholden from the house of God? Is the excitement quite gone?

There is a promise that is nested in the Scriptures that the Lord would raise up an army like has never before been seen. There is a time of restoration coming. I want to see this great outpouring of the Holy Ghost. I want to be there when the excitement is running through our streets like a river, and souls are running to the altar to receive the power of God in their lives. I believe it's coming and nothing will stop it.

But before it comes, there must be an alarm that is sounded. The trumpet must be blown in Zion to prepare for the battle and to call the people of God to cry out for God to restore unto us that which the palmerworm and locust have eaten. No revival has ever come without somebody getting on their knees before God. It doesn't just drop out of the sky.

Are we satisfied with just "church as usual"? Then that is all we will have. Are you hungry for more? Then it is time to sound an alarm in God's holy mountain and prepare for the battle.

There's a rustling in the mulberry trees, and a breeze is beginning to blow. I can smell the smoke of battle afar off, and it is heading this way. What an exciting time to live in!

About the Author

Dalen Garris has been in ministry since 1970 during the Jesus Movement in California. In 1997, he started a radio broadcast that was heard on stations around the world for almost 12 years. A newspaper column followed, for which he has written over 700 articles, which were published in newspapers and Christian magazines in several countries. He has also written several books and booklets.

Since 2004, he has been lighting the fires of revival in churches spread across sub-Saharan Africa. During the course of 16 years, he has preached in almost 1,000 churches, has seen hundreds of churches set on fire and explode with growth. He has prayed with hundreds of people who were supernaturally healed and tens of thousands who have been saved. And the fires are still burning.

Because of his work across Africa, Dalen Garris was awarded an honorary Doctorate in 2017 by the Northwestern Christian University of Florida.

Dr. Garris currently lives with Cindy, his wife of 42 years, in Waxahachie and is still heavily involved with churches across Africa. His pressing hope is in seeing this upcoming generation be the Gideon Generation that will usher in this last, great revival that he has preached about for so many years.

If you would like Dalen Garris to speak at your church or organization, please contact us for times and schedules.

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