

Sermon: Prophecy Is Important

Text: II Peter 1:12-21

Gary L. Wackler

February 1, 2009

Introduction: It might be well from the beginning to have a working definition of “prophecy.” “Prophecy is proclamation, or forth-telling the Word and will of God, coupled with a command to obey. Prophecy’s focus, then, is not primarily on predicting the future, but on obedience to God’s Word and will in the present” (Robert A. Lowery, *Revelation’s Rhapsody Listening to the Lyrics of the Lamb*, pp. 213-214).

There certainly is a point to which all the Old Testament generally may serve as prophecy. Many of its figures are considered types of Christ. Christ is seen as the second Adam, a type of Moses, a type of Davidic king. Jesus Christ completely fulfills what was only seen in the O.T. as “a shadow of the good things to come.” Even O.T. religious festivals and practices are clearly seen fulfilled in Jesus.

Colossians 2:16-17 (NIV) ¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Jesus is considered a prophet of God.

Acts 3:22-23 (NIV) ²²For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.’

So how important is prophecy and listening (obeying) to those who truly speak for God?

Peter was a prophet in every sense of the word. I am a prophet, also, certainly not of the same caliber, but bringing the same words, under the same divine authority, and with the same responsibility: to deliver the Truth.

Those who do not obey God’s Word will be “completely cut off from His people” - pretty important stuff!

Later today, the Super Bowl commercials may very well create a buzz around a word or phrase designed to try and get you to buy or believe something. I guarantee you this will be completely forgotten in a short time.

All words, even if they are the same words, are not of equal value. Politicians are not of equal value either. If the former governor of Illinois and the president of the United States both say “Yes we can!” Who do you believe? Time will tell for both.

The value of words depends in large part, too, not on the skill of the speaker, but on the credibility of the speaker. A ten-year old boy may say what he thinks is important in life, and also a 100-year old man. Whose counsel is more likely to be wise?

God’s Word brings life and is eternally true. In the context of the end of time all the gospel writers remind us that Jesus said:

Matthew 24:35 (NIV) ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

In our text in II Peter, we see an aged-apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ near the end of his life wanting to remind his listeners of important words about eternal life. They had heard them before, but Peter wanted to make sure they heard them again. Today, I stand in that same tradition, repeating myself, but wanting to say again what you may need to hear.

Prophecy Is Important. Just like Peter, it calls us to:

I. Tell People of God’s Desire for Them (vv. 12-15).

II Peter 1:12-15 (NIV) ¹²So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

God wants everyone to be saved, but He never intended for us to remain as babies in the faith. He wants us to mature and grow in His Word.

To do that, we need:

A. To Repeat the Truth of God’s Word

Fred Craddock recalls: “Some years ago, some of us who were ministers, pastors, and teachers in seminaries were asked to form a group, and before a large body of students and laypersons, to say who was the most influential person apart from our parents in the formation of our lives and our movement to ministry. We had two or three weeks notice, but it was a difficult matter for me. Finally, when my turn came, I stood up and gave them a name they had never heard of. I said, ‘Miss Emma Sloan.’”

As children, we called all women ‘Miss.’ (Miss Bullock in NC turned 100 last year) Miss Emma Sloan was an elderly woman, single. She taught me in the primary department (Mrs. Brown for me), and since there was nobody to teach us as juniors, she went right on with us, and taught us for years. She gave me a Bible. She wrote in the front: ‘May this be a light to your feet, a lamp for your path. Emma Sloan.’ She taught us to memorize the Bible; she never tried to interpret it. I don’t remember her ever explaining anything. She said, ‘Just put it in your heart, just put it in your heart.’

She used the alphabet, and we’d go around the room saying verses, A - A soft answer turns away wrath. B - Be ye kind, one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, as God also in Christ has forgiven you. C - Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden. D - Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. E - Every good and perfect gift ... F - For God so loved the world ... Don’t worry, I’m not going to go on.

I still remember all that. She didn’t explain it. We learned from the King James Bible all those verses. I had to say to those students and church folk that Sunday afternoon, ‘I can’t think of anything, anything in all my life that has made such a radical difference as those verses. The Spirit of God brings them to my mind appropriately, time and time and time again.’ (Craddock Stories, pp. 33-34)

This is important:

- 1. for the present generation.**

Peter mentored Mark who wrote possibly the earliest gospel in the NT. You can’t pass on what you don’t have or know. And Peter was doing everything he could to share what he understood with his generation.

A Roman Catholic Bishop (Untener) I knew in Michigan had memorized the gospels.

I read recently of an organization that is offering this year a grand prize to teens of \$100,000 for memorizing the most scripture.

I personally love Bible reading and study, and because of the way my mind works I need constant reminders and repetition to keep things up there. Maybe you are like me. I need my memory refreshed. Even the Lord’s Supper is practiced weekly so we will not forget Jesus’ sacrifice for us until He comes again for His Church.

I want to encourage you, if you are not already, to get in a study group or attend Sunday School. It will change you!

If we don't fill our minds with God's Word now, what will be the spiritual outlook:

2. for the future generation(s).

In the future there will be more pressure on the Church by false teachers and those who are ignorant in Scripture to move away from the truth of God's Word and compromise Biblical principles.

Like any good building the future must have a solid foundation in the present.

Peter understood that it was God's will:

B. To Be Fruitful as Long as Possible.

Jesus had already told Peter basically how he was to die ([John 21:18-19](#)) and quite frankly with Nero in power, it did not take a great prophet to predict what would happen to him and other Christians who were serious about their faith.

Even in Peter's time there were followers that had fallen asleep spiritually, and time was short. He needed to rouse them before it was too late. As we age we realize that the idea of a tent to describe our bodies is accurate. The flesh is transitory - here today, gone tomorrow! And after all we are just pilgrims destined for a better place.

No one knows when God will call us home; but in the meantime, we need to share our faith and mentor those who are interested in a heavenly home. Invest in people!

Prophecy Is Important. Just like Peter, it calls us to help others:

II. Develop a Saving-Relationship with God ([vv. 16-18](#)).

[II Peter 1:16-18 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁶We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

A. Credible witnesses saw reasons to believe.

What do witnesses do? They testify. Peter was doing exactly that by sharing what he had seen while with Jesus. He had seen Jesus heal the sick, raise the dead, give sight to the blind, cast out demons, feed the hungry, and teach the multitudes. A common response was: [Luke 9:43a \(NIV\)](#) ⁴³And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

While trying to walk on water, Peter caught a glimpse of God.

Peter was one of the apostles who had seen the transfiguration of Jesus. It was during that experience that his faith grew, and he wants to share that experience. Peter saw Jesus with the heroes of the O.T.

Matthew 17:1-3 (NIV) ¹After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Peter, James and John were “eyewitnesses of his majesty.” They saw Jesus for who he was: God!

B. Credible witnesses heard reasons to believe.

Peter had heard wonderful preaching, lessons and words from Jesus’ lips that had inspired, challenged, rebuked, encouraged, healed, and even astonished. He taught with authority and in God’s power just like Peter would at Pentecost under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

But what Peter heard on the mountain would change his perspective. And he knew the importance of passing this on.

Matthew 17:4-9 (NIV) ⁴Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” ⁸When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

The importance of events and words came clear later. Now it was time to tell, and Peter was a first-hand witness. He and the other apostles were different from the false teachers who misinterpreted Jesus’ words and made up stories that were no more than fables and myths with no connection to the Truth.

II Timothy 3:1-5 (NIV) ¹But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ²People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

Peter understands that prophecy is a lamp to the people's feet and will direct them in the ways they should go.

Prophecy Is Very Important, and just like Peter, it calls us to:

III. Be Selective in What We Believe (vv. 19-21).

II Peter 1:19-21 (NIV) ¹⁹And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' coming did not do away with the significance of the O.T., but validates its credibility and accuracy.

A. Until we understand God's Word.

The O.T. told of a coming-king like David, a law-giver like Moses and a prophet like Elijah. It was Jesus who would fulfill these hopes and dreams AND MORE!

Last week we talked of being on a journey hopefully to heaven. Michael Green in his commentary comments (p. 100): "we are on pilgrimage throughout our lives in this dark world. God has graciously provided us with a lamp, the Scriptures. If we pay attention to them for reproof, warning, guidance and encouragement we shall walk safely. If we neglect them, we shall be engulfed by darkness. The whole course of our lives ought to be governed by the Word of God."

I think Green is saying that without knowing and obeying God's Word, heaven is out of the question.

B. Prophecy whose source is God (Holy Spirit)

A lot of people have claimed, and even today claim, they speak for God. Yet, not everyone does. There is much confusion in the Church today on a variety of issues. Really the only place you can go for answers is the Bible. You should never follow anyone who calls into question the accuracy or inspired nature of the Bible or its writers. They do not belong to God.

"Scripture is neither given (v. 21) nor interpreted by man (v. 20); the Spirit does both tasks." - Green, pp. 100-101

What does it mean to be holy? On one level, it simply means to be used by God.

Conclusion: “I remember when they brought the famous list to Atlanta. The workers set it up in the public place -- block after block to form a long wall of names, Vietnam names. Some of us looked at it like it was a list of names; others went over closer. Some walked slowly down the columns. There was a woman who went up and put her finger on a name, and she held a child up and put the child’s hand on the name. There was a woman there who kissed the wall at a name. There were flowers lying beneath the wall. Don’t call it a list. It’s not a list. - *Craddock Stories*, p. 151

Prophecy is not mere words, and the Bible is not just a book.

How do you feel about God’s Word? I hope you believe prophecy is important.

It is important to remember the cost of our salvation. It is critical to our success as Christians that we are reminded of our godly responsibility to lead virtuous lives. Finally it is important that we know the difference between God’s truth, and heresy that is offered up as truth. In [verses 12-15](#) Peter talked about his relationship with God. He uses the pronoun, “I.” In [verses 16-18](#) it seems the “we” used is referring to Peter and the other apostles. In [verses 19-21](#) Peter offers an invitation for others to be or continue to be “we” the Church and not be fooled by the smooth and deceptive words of the false teachers.

That same invitation to believe the truth of God’s Word, and all its promises, is yours today!