

Oracle #3 Part I: Prophets and Prophecy Today

Good morning!

In the Dilbert cartoon on the screen, Alice asks a question that surprises many around the table: do they need to listen to the content of the boss' message or should they rely solely on the charismatic tone of the boss' voice? The question is a good one. Well, as most know here, I'm originally from Rhode Island, and Rhode Islanders have not had a charismatic voice since Roger Williams died in 1683. So, I'm forced to believe that CONTENT is more important – and fortunately for me, Scripture confirms that assessment.

The Apostle John wrote in his first epistle: “Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must **test** them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. **For there are many false prophets in the world.**” 1 John 4:1

The Dilbert slide, while comical, awkwardly touches on an issue that is usually avoided by many churches: are we to accept as genuine those who claim to have prophetic messages or come as apostles just because they seem sincere? They lead thriving ministries; they sound and look good; they exude authority and have nice smiles and nice cars – and sometimes even nice private jets paid for by donations from people who believe in their ministry!

The topic of this morning is not an easy one, and it is not without controversy. The topic is **Prophets and Prophecy**

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today. And, as part of this discussion, we'll be looking at a recent prophetic vision that is very popular today. We'll continue with Numbers Chapter 24 next time, but for today, let's limit the discussion to Prophecy: what IS IT and what IS IT NOT.

- Alice's question basically is: *should we evaluate the content of the prophetic message or just accept what they say because of their charismatic bearing?*

Now, most Christians would agree that we should “test all things and hold fast to the good” (1 Thess. 5:21). This is not, however, how today's charismatic church operates; we *detest* controversy; for someone to dare to question a teaching or prophecy from a well-known individual leads to being labeled as *uncharitable, troublesome, and disruptive of the unity of the body*.

So, in large measure, the sound of the prophets' voices IS often more important than the content of their messages. Churches are deliberately ignoring the warnings of Christ, of John, of Paul, of Peter and of Jude about false teachings; instead, they prefer a skewed understanding of what Christian unity means. In truth, we should be uniting around Christ and rejecting ANYTHING – including false prophecy – that undermines Christ or His Word.

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OK – Chapters 23 & 24 of the Book of Numbers are essential to understanding of what prophecy IS and IS NOT. Tighten your seatbelts – I WILL BE SAYING some things that will automatically guarantee that I will NEVER be invited to a prophetic conference.

On the subject of saying things that you should never say, someone sent me an e-mail message recently about things that you should never say. For example, you should never say to a POLICE OFFICER that:

- “You're not gonna check the trunk, are you?” or...
- “I thought you had to be in relatively good physical condition to be a police officer.”

SHOULDN'T SAY TO A WOMAN

- What happened to your hair?
- You look so tired.
- Have you tried wearing makeup?

SHOULDN'T SAY TO YOUR PASTOR

- I wish I had a job like yours, where I would work only one day a week.
- Can I have a couple of minutes before you preach?
- Did I wake you up, pastor? It's only 1:00 am.

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On to the main topic of today: *Prophecy – what it IS and what it is NOT*. In Acts 2:17–18, we read that Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost and said, "...this is what was spoken about through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God said, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophecy.'"

Since Pentecost, we have been living in "the last days" and so we should expect that the Holy Spirit would be as active as Jesus promised. However, perhaps more than with any other spiritual gift, we must use extreme caution when dealing with prophecy. We must test ALL who claim to be a prophet and to hear from God thru direct inspiration, dreams or visions. The Apostle John wrote: "**Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world.**" 1 John 4:1

A similar testing of those who claim to be Apostles is also required, although that is not the topic for today.

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SLIDE: REVELATORY GIFTS TODAY

Now, not all Christians believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are active today. There are two main camps on this issue:

<CLICK> there are those who hold that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have *CEASED*. This group is called cessationists. – the term '*cessationism*' comes from the 17th-century confessions of faith, such as the Westminster and Baptist. Because the canon of Scripture is now complete, these confessions say that the: '*Former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people (are) now ceased*'. In other words, since all we need to know has already been revealed in Scripture, the revelation gifts and the offices of prophet and apostle are no longer needed.

<CLICK> The opposing group is called continuationists – they believes that all the gifts *CONTINUE* today. Now, some continuationists exclude *the offices of apostle and prophet* from being active today because the canon of Scripture is complete; however, most continuationists believe that these offices also continue – but perhaps in a *modified* form.

Both camps make valid points. I agree with the cessationist position that Scripture IS closed because no one has the authority to add to it today – **there can be no *new* revelation in that sense – all that we need to know has been revealed in the Scriptures.**

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At the same time, however, I agree with the continuationist camp's position that holds that the gifts of the Holy Spirit ARE for today. I do this for two main reasons:

- #1. The Bible does not specifically say that they will cease BEFORE the 2nd Coming of Christ¹, and...
- #2. It seems impossible to me to *infallibly* say that the gifts have all ceased because you would need to have a gift of knowledge to do so.

My position always is that God can do ANYTHING He so chooses that is in keeping with His nature – He cannot lie, He does not change His mind, He does not go back on His promises – but He CAN intervene in our lives as He desires. I believe that it is always *unsafe* to say that God CANNOT do something because He might just decide to show how wrong you are. Therefore, I believe that any gift of the Holy Spirit can be given today to any believer at any time that **He** so decides. **However**, until the final two witnesses of Revelation Chapter 11 come on the scene, I have my doubts whether **anyone could QUALIFY to hold the Office of Prophet or Apostle**

¹ I Cor 13:10: "but when that which is *perfect* has come, then that which is in part (prophecy, etc.) will be done away." Some argue that *perfect* refers to the completion of the canon of Scripture; others say that the *perfect* only arrives with the return of Christ when prophecy won't be needed, since we will see Him face-to-face. I believe that the Unique type of prophecy *has* ceased – the cessationists' viewpoint - but all prophecy has not ceased (exhortation, comfort, etc.) - continuationists' viewpoint.

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(like Isaiah or John the Baptist or Peter). But, that aside, we should EXPECT to have healings and prophecy.

- But Scripture gives us a GIANT caution: **be very careful**, because the gifts and offices *can be* – and routinely are – faked by men and counterfeited by demons.

Scripture instructs us to test EVERY spiritual claim. Prophecy in particular is subject to distortion and abuse. We must NEVER accept statements blindly because someone claims to be a prophet or declares “*The Lord told me*”.

- 50,000 ‘likes’ on Facebook are no guarantee of prophetic legitimacy. We are COMMANDED to test prophecy and prophetic ministries.
- And when a prophecy and prophet fails the test, we can’t just shrug our shoulders and say “*they meant well but just got it wrong this time.*” False prophecy is ALWAYS an offense against God’s Holiness; it’s a violation of the 3rd commandment of not taking His Name in Vain. I don’t think that God has changed His mind on the topic of His Holiness.

SLIDE: WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN WE HEAR ...

Now, what comes to mind when someone is referred to as a modern-day apostle or prophet? <CLICKS>

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- He/she hears God clearer than I do – they have access to spiritual information that I don't have
 - They have Spiritual Authority in the Church
 - Their Everyday words & opinions carry more weight
 - They are a Channel for “*revelations*”
 - And, they deserve to Sit at the head table
- Most of us would admit, if we were completely honest, that ALL of these things come to mind.
- **And I suspect that this is a chief reason WHY people LIKE to be seen as prophets and apostles today! They take PRIDE in being humble.**

SLIDE: *Hello – MY NAME IS JOE THE PROPHET (get a nametag?)*

Someday I'd like to show up at – or rather *sneak into* – a prophetic conference wearing this nametag and see what the reaction would be.

We regularly hear claims of “*God told me*” thus-and-so or *God just revealed to me xyz in a word of knowledge*. How often do we dare ask: *is that really true?* Did God *really* say xyz? I'm afraid to admit that oftentimes I just give the speaker the benefit of the doubt – especially if I like the

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person – and move on assuming that what they said IS true. However, that's unscriptural for me to do so.

Claims of special revelation, of journeys to heaven and casual conversations with Jesus and angels are widespread. All you need to do is to look on the internet, browse Christian bookstores, fly to the latest prophetic conference or tune into a Christian TV channel. Prophets are all over the map recounting their dreams, visions and direct inspirations from the Lord – **and I guess that they ARE prophets because they have business cards that say so.**

- I have to admit to occasionally tuning in to Christian TV and watching self-labeled “prophets” – it’s somewhat like watching professional wrestling – you know that most of it is fake but still – it is a bit entertaining.

Now: this might sound like a strange question, but here it is: Q: **are WE allowed to evaluate prophetic statements?** Most Christians would say YES because Scripture says that we MUST test such claims. However, the reality is that, within the charismatic community, judgment is usually reserved to the “professionals” – the small **elite** group of Christians who claim to be prophets and apostles and thus supposedly have

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cornered the market on spiritual discernment. For the rest of us, we're supposedly not equipped.

But, JESUS never feared scrutiny from anyone – so why do the modern-day prophets? The Holy Spirit, Who inspired the Scriptures, commands that ALL of us evaluate the veracity of all information that is claimed to come from Him. Miracles, dreams, visions, and prophecies need to be tested.

Now, to show you how old I am, in 1977 I heard Oral Robert talking on TV about a vision he had from a 900-foot-tall Jesus. In the vision, Jesus told him to build City of Faith Medical and Research Center in Tulsa OK. It would be a model for the world, linking medicine and the healing power of God. The slogan was “*a breakthrough in heaven in 77*” – since it was 1977, faithful Christians were asked to donate a minimum of \$77 to make this happen. I did, and \$77 to me back then was a significant amount. Donations totaled \$120 million when the Center opened in 1981; however, only 2 floors were ever fully occupied; it closed in 1989 and most of the complex was converted to office space and leased out as CityPlex Towers.

Now, my sending \$77 was as a gift to God, so I will never criticize anyone who is taken by a false vision in like I was. At the time, I was a new Christian and I figured that someone famous for a healing ministry who was in his 60s would not lie or exaggerate about such a thing.

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However, having been in the charismatic movement now for over 40 years, I have reached a conclusion that most of the claims of prophetic revelation are either the product of a vivid imagination, a demonic spirit, a pretext for a monetary solicitation or some combination of all three – either that, or **the person had bad Chinese food too close to bedtime.**

- **Example: Mussolini = anti-Christ?** Pentecostal pastor Stewart G. Norris – *I'm glad that I sold all my books before they got him.* The pastor has a sense of humor!

Now – a common attitude shared by pastor and individuals today in prophetic ministries is that neither seem to be *fazed one bit when they make a false prophecy or relate a false vision. Why IS that? Even gamblers have their professional pride ruffled when they make inaccurate predictions.*

- **The answer to that question is seen in another Question: Are modern-day prophets allowed to make mistakes?** Well – YES! At least, that's what THEY say. Prophets today can and do make mistakes; in fact, numerous prophetic mistakes ARE TO BE EXPECTED, they say. REALLY? Does that strike anyone else besides me as odd?

We'll get into how this distorted view of Biblical prophecy has come about in a moment. And it is a distortion!

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SLIDE: The Apostle Peter wrote that: "**NO** prophecy of scripture ever comes about by **the prophet's own imagination, for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse**, rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Two points here:

- 1) true prophecy does not come from the prophet's own imagination, and
- 2) The Holy Spirit orchestrates it so that God's intended message comes through.

If a person claims to have a prophecy for the Church and then says that PART of the prophecy is from God and part is probably is from their own imagination, you can be sure that NONE OF IT is from God – you can reject ALL of it outright.

Is everyone Ok so far?

- You see, Biblical prophets are ALWAYS clear in what they have HEARD AND SEEN from God. They may not understand what it MEANS, but they are SURE of what they heard.

OK – let's get into the question of PROPHECY: what IS it and what IS it NOT? As in intro, please recall that, in the past two sessions on the Book of Numbers, God introduced us to several foundational principles about Himself. I have said and say again: Verse 19 of Chapter 23 is **A PIVOTAL VERSE IN**

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SCRIPTURE. ... and one way of recognizing true prophecy is whether or not it adheres to these principles...

SLIDE: God is not a man...

- #1. The 1st principle is that God is NOT a man, so stop treating Him as such and assuming that He uses human logic in His decision-making.
- #2. The 2nd – God does not LIE and He keeps all His promises. We saw that the use of the Hebrew word for “LIE” (*kasav*) mainly connotes outright deception; however, it sometimes is used when describing something that merely *disappoints* or *fails* without the notion of conscious deceit, like when Isaiah described a well that had no water. Trust in God’s word will NEVER disappoint or fail; so too, true prophecy – God speaking to us – will NEVER fail.
- #3. Third – God says that He does NOT change His mind. True prophecy will never insinuate that God’s opinions on things have changed. We do find occasions where God announced that things will be different when x, y and z happens. (for example: In Jeremiah 7:3, God said to Israel: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place.” -

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Things would change ON THE CONDITION that they returned to Him. Otherwise, things won't. That is NOT a case of Him changing His mind.)

<CLICK> And finally, we saw that God's Holiness is so magnificent that even an UNINTENTIONAL sin required atonement under the Levitical sacrificial system by the death of an innocent animal.

SLIDE: SAY WHAT?

I realize that, if you didn't hear the previous presentations, this last principle may seem somewhat unexpected. Am I saying that even if I unintentionally – by mistake – infringe upon His Holiness, it is STILL an act that needed to be atoned for?

<Click> YES – we may find this difficult to believe, but both the Books of Leviticus and Numbers make that perfectly clear.

- All sin, intentional or not, is an Offense against Him. Unintentionally spilling red paint on a white rug is just as offensive to the whiteness of the rug as if it had been done intentionally.

I mention this 4th principle because it also applies to prophecy. When someone falsely gives a “prophecy” using God's Holy Name, it is called *presumption* in the Bible and that person has transgressed upon God's Holiness. Even though

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they might be *sincere* and would never *knowingly* disrespect Him, the act of even *unintentionally* taking God's Holy Name in vain is still an offense against His holiness! You've broken the 3rd Commandment!

- Perhaps some may say that this sounds unreasonable. Well– we need to Wake up – God is NOT a man, so we need to stop treating Him as such. **His standards are higher than ours.**

SLIDE: OUTLINE FOR TODAY

Ok – with that introduction, here are the topics I want to look at today:

- A person who holds the Office of Prophet vs individuals who receives a *WORD of prophecy*
- New Testament Prophecy
- Visions of trips to heaven
- Jesus is sufficient in everything.

Let's start by asking the question: **What do you think of when you hear the term "prophecy"?**

- Predicting the future? Revealing secret things that only God knows? Warnings to repent?

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Well, prophecy includes these things, but it is a lot more.

Prophecy is an umbrella word – it covers a wide range of activity, similar to the way the *term ‘doctor’ does*. We normally think that doctor refers to a medical person, but it can also refer to:

- An academic holder of a PhD (e.g.; PhD in Economics).
- Veterinarian
- Basketball player (Dr. J.)
- Soda (Dr. Pepper) or a company that cleans rugs (the “Rug Doctor”)
- or even it may refer to a Radio talk host (Rush – the “Doctor of Democracy”)

So too, prophecy may be manifested in many forms. Because of this, I like to use a simplified definition that covers the scope of prophetic activity:

SLIDE: MY DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

1. Speaking the Truth about God or from God.

I put up this admittedly simplified definition of mine primarily to highlight the point that prophecy – in any form – ALWAYS involves telling TRUTHFUL things.

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Biblical Prophecy **reveals** things that are TRUE. Most of us have grown up as Christians believing that, when the NT speaks about *revelation* from prophecy, that there is only *one* kind of revelation. In truth, however, there are **two** kinds: the first kind of “revelation” is what we normally associate with prophecy – **it is unique**; **IT IS THE VERY WORDS OF GOD**, and it concerns that which would have been unknown had God not chosen to reveal it (as He did uniquely to and through His apostles and prophets).

The other kind of revelation, the kind that *normally* happens in a congregation, is when God opens the eyes of individual Christians to the glories of salvation through Christ.

This second and more common type of revelation is seen in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, where he prays that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of **REVELATION** in the knowledge of Him. I pray **that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.**” Ephesians 1:16-18

This type of revelation reveals Who He is in our lives and who we are IN HIM. **It may be NEW to us, but it is not new to Scripture.** It is not the revelation of secret information that has never been revealed before to anyone; rather, it’s “revelation” in the sense the Holy Spirit allows us to see Christ in a clearer way.

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SLIDE: Joe the Prophet

<click> Here's my nametag again – and while it is somewhat humorous to call myself a prophet, it is also partially true. You see, the reality is that there is a difference between prophet with a Capital “P” and prophet with a small “p”.

<click> Prophet with a Capital P is one who holds the Office of Prophet. (Isaiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, etc.). This is the type of individual we normally associate with the term “prophet” – they receive the UNIQUE kind of revelation that we mentioned.

<click> however, a *prophet* – with a small letter ‘p’ – means “*one who prophesies*” (that can be either you, me, or any of us). When someone prophesizes in a congregation, it's normally about how great Jesus is and what He has done for us. In that moment, that person *is* a prophet (small ‘p’) in this sense of *speaking a word of truth about God*. He/she does not hold the Office of prophet.

Sometimes we confuse “inspiration” with prophecy. The OT prophet received inspiration from the Holy Spirit and he/she spoke the very words of God – without any error and without any doubt as to it being from God. Today, many sincere Christians believe that *every* thought that pops into their heads is an inspired word from God. That's dangerous. And, even if a thought IS from God, just getting the thought is NOT

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prophecy – God may be revealing something just for us ALONE. It *becomes* a form of prophecy when we respond to His urging to **share** the word or Scripture for the comfort and the building up of others. Because we can be wrong in mistakenly thinking a thought is from God when it is just us, or because we may put a spin on it that was not intended, Scripture says we must judge such statements. That's why I always suggest that we say *"I THINK the Lord may be saying..."* The Biblical prophets (capital P) had no such issues.

- This will become somewhat clearer as we go along.

Let's talk about the Office of Prophet (capital P) that some continuationists believe is operating today *in a modified form*.

SLIDE: The Office of Prophet

Again, Prophecy (my simplified definition) is "Speaking the Truth ABOUT God and FROM God".

<click> The Person who holds the 'Office of Prophet' in Scripture was an authority figure in the community and the nation. He/she receives UNIQUE revelations from God: predictions of the future, the calling down of judgement upon nations, the rebuking of kings, and the writing of Scripture.

<click> OT: Isaiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Moses, etc.

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<click> NT: Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, Luke, etc.

<click> To determine whether or not a person holds the Office of Prophet, God provided **three basic Scriptural tests: doctrinal integrity, moral integrity, 100% ACCURATE IN THEIR PREDICTIONS.** Claiming to be a Prophet of God and having your prophecy fail or your doctrine be corrupt was a serious sin with serious consequences!

SLIDE: Normal Types of Prophecy Today

Paul wrote, "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophecy" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

- This letter was written to the entire congregation at Corinth – so, Paul is saying that any members of a congregation might prophecy.

This is prophecy in the congregation; it is not the UNIQUE type of prophecy given by Prophets like Isaiah. Rather, we referring to *someone – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – teaching or praying or speaking or singing about Who Christ is, or about what Promises God has made and that He is always faithful, or that we are a new creation in Christ and urging others to reject all suggestions that we are not.*

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Paul wrote: “(O)ne who prophesies speaks to men for **strengthening and encouragement and consolation**. ...the one who prophesies builds up the church.” 1Corinthians 14:3-5

This type of prophecy is not about predicting the future. Rather, Paul says, “the one who prophesies speaks to men for **edification and exhortation and consolation**.” (1Corinthians 14:3). The term for edify means “to build up.” What is “built up” is the church and the members in particular. People who continually make false predictions *without any repentance or embarrassment* build up no one *except themselves*.

The purpose of prophecy in the congregation is also to **“COMFORT”**. Speaking the truth of the Gospel comforts Christians – that’s why Music Ministry is so important – they are prophesying thru their music. How?

SLIDE: In His vision, the Apostle John is told by an angel whose magnificence overwhelmed him: “Don’t worship me. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears **testimony to Jesus**.” (Rev. 19:10): **A “Testimony” is a statement given by a WITNESS to an event.** The angel is saying 2 things here: 1) The fact that there IS prophecy is the evidence that Jesus rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sent back the Holy Spirit as promised! 2) And as we worship God, we *are* likewise giving *witness to those same things!* We’re following the angel’s advice: “*Witnessing to Christ IS a form of Prophecy.*”

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- **Communion is another form of witnessing** – we're recalling Jesus' blood poured out for "the forgiveness of sins". And we proclaiming that He promised to RETURN!

So, there are two basic types of prophecy in Scripture – the **unique type** of Isaiah and the **congregational type**.

Now, here's where I'm certain to ruffle some feathers. There is belief that there are certain people today who are official prophets to the church. I'm not talking about prophesying in the local congregation. I'm talking about people who tell us that they are anointed to prophesy to the **WHOLE CHURCH!** Are they correct?

SLIDE: Confusion Today

Here's the situation today. There are two Scriptural types of prophets – I referred to them as *capital P* and *small p*. Capital P are those individuals who held the Office of Prophet and thus had significant spiritual authority in the community. According to Deuteronomy, God specified how to test the legitimacy of their claim: two tests in particular were **NON-NEGOTIABLE**: 100% accuracy AND doctrinally correct according to Scripture.

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[Bob DeWaay quote: *There were good reasons for the Old Testament standards. The stakes were high. The destiny of nations, the authority of God's word, and the future history of Israel and her Messiah were at stake. If false prophets were taken as true, the whole revelation of God's purposes would be **polluted**. For that reason, not only did their predictions have to be true; but they also had to give true teaching about God.]*

<click> the new assertion is that prophecy TO THE CHURCH – and the qualifications for a prophet who does this – have *changed* under the NT. I call this new class – the *“Neo-Prophet”*.

<click> These are individuals who WANT to have the authority and status similar to that of an OT prophet but who do NOT want to be held to the 100% accuracy and doctrinal integrity criteria. They hold that JESUS IS INSTRUCTING THE CHURCH THRU THEM, but they also admit that their words are NOT THE VERY WORD OF GOD like that of the OT prophets. But that's OK nowadays, they say; it's OK that their prophecies are a *mixture* of God's word and their own imagination. A prophet can therefore fail numerous times nowadays but still be considered a prophet and continue to sit at the head table because God is using them in a special way.

- By the way, – holding to this position in Moses' day would get you stoned.

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HOW do these people justify their claims? By essentially saying that God has **CHANGED His mind in the New Testament about the purity of prophecy.**

- **God has change His mind? – I thought that He said in verse 19 of Numbers chapter 23 that He DOESN'T change His mind.**

Of course, the supporters of this new view string together a few NT texts for support, but – if you every played that game of *Twister* – you will appreciate the painful yoga positions this entails. They would do a Jehovah's Witness proud.

I won't get into the proof texts today, because it would take too long and a Sunday message is not the best place of such analysis. **The bottom line is that God says that He doesn't change His mind and they say He does.** However, **neither Joel nor Peter indicates *any* qualitative difference in the nature of prophecy to the church after Pentecost.**

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BUT, WHY do they do this? I believe most of these individuals ARE Christians who WANT to hear the Lord, they believe that their inspirations are from God and want to be recognized as prophets. They LIKE the title. But, in order have the title, they MUST redefine the qualifications because they have a serious and embarrassing problem:

- their predictions usually fail and their teachings contain doctrinal aberrations.

So what do they do? Like we all do at times: we, like Adam and Eve, try to preserve our status by using a **FIG-LEAF to cover over our butts when we make mistakes.** The revised definition of prophecy serves as cover for their numerous predictive inaccuracies.

As a brief aside, I saw the human **self-interest tendency** play out when I was studying for the diaconate in the Catholic Church – before being kicked out for being too Protestant. Our class on Scripture was taught by a nun. She was a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame. Coincidentally, back when I was in junior high school at St. Mary's Catholic School in Providence RI., the school was run by THE VERY SAME RELIGIOUS ORDER OF NUNS.

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<CLICK> Nuns

Here's what I faced every day... Imagine this picture with a ruler in her hand. Actually, they were very kind to us, but sometimes my knuckles still do hurt when the weather is about to change.

As I said, the teacher of my class on Scripture in the diaconate program was of the same religious order – here's how SHE dressed. <CLICK> Quite a difference. Now, dress does not determine who you are as a Christian, but I show this picture because my diaconate teacher was a well-known and vocal member of the feminist movement in Albany.

- And, again, there's nothing wrong with being a supporter of women's rights – Jesus was the Greatest supporter of women's rights.

Here's why I bring this up. In a class on the Book of Genesis, – there was about 30 of us – the good sister emphatically stated that Adam had rule over all the animals because he named them. I raised my hand – which undoubtedly was another nail in my ecclesiastical coffin – and asked the question: *Since naming the animals indicated Adam's headship, is the fact that he also named Eve the reason why the husband is the head of the household?*

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Well – everyone laughed – except her. She sputtered *no, no, no...* in obvious confusion.

- You see, she was firm on Scriptural principle **UNTIL IT IMPACTED HER**. And then she needed to find a way to alter the principle.

I mention this incident because **THAT'S PRECISELY** what is being done to the Scriptural standards for Apostles and Prophets (capital P and capital A). **If you can't meet them – redefine terms and claim that things are now different.**

SLIDE: God does NOT Change.

Back to verse 19 of Numbers chapter 23. “God is not a man... that He should change His mind.”

IF you need to teach that God HAS change His mind in order for you to justify your position, you have violated Scripture by contradicting His declaration that HE DOES NOT CHANGE.

- Here is the reason **WHY** many charismatic leaders believe it is cool to downplay and ridicule doctrine. Before you can successfully promote a false teaching, that pesky thing called Doctrine HAS to be undermined.

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- Once they convince people that God HAS changed His mind now that we're in the NT, then Scripture is no longer the ultimate judge of the veracity of dreams and visions and prophecies – or false teachings. *And claiming that Jesus gave the “new revelation” increases its authority.* After you diminish the role Scripture, what's left for them to use as a yardstick of truth? They appeal to human reasoning and emotional assessments for support – like “It feels right” and it must be true because 300 people fall down during the meetings. That's where much of the church is today. Remember – Scripture is the key. False teachers NEED to undermine Scripture and Doctrine in order for them to prosper.
- **Sadly, the true horror of where such reasoning ultimately leads escapes them.** IF God can change His mind, then we ALL face a much GREATER dilemma that mere failure to meet the established criteria for a prophet. Because IF God HAS changed on this established issue, of WHAT then can we be certain regarding OTHER things He has established?
 - **What blessed ASSURANCE would we have that He won't change His mind about salvation being through FAITH in Christ alone. Or that we will be resurrected from the dead? Will there be additional conditions added later thru a vision or a dream?**

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This is why I say that Verse 19 of Numbers Chapter 23 is a PIVOTAL verse in Scripture – God says that **He is NOT like men**. He does NOT need to invent fig leaves to cover failure. He does not change His mind when things don't work out as planned; **He doesn't need fake credentials**.

- **DOCTRINE MATTERS!**
- **IT CAN'T THINK OF A SINGLE CHRISTIAN MARTYR WHO WAS APATHETIC ABOUT DOCTRINE.**

We have to resist ANY attempt to remake God in our own image, otherwise we end up worshipping an idol of our own making. **I praise the Father BECAUSE He is NOT like us.**

- SO, HOW SHOULD WE HANDLE THIS IF IT HAPPENS HERE?

Let's assume that someone who is said to be a prophet visits us some Sunday. What do we do when receiving someone who claims this title? Moses answered this question for us...

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SLIDE: DO NOT FEAR THEM

“How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does **not** come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” Deuteronomy 18: 21-22

WWMD – what would Moses do? The 1st thing Moses would have us do is to ask the visitor a simple question: *Have you ever been wrong in any of your predictions?* If the answer is ‘YES’, then we must conclude that they are falsely claiming to be the Office of Prophet and therefore their prophecies & teachings cannot be trusted – **do not be afraid of them! Tell them to be quiet.** I would do this because that’s exactly what Deuteronomy Chapter 18 **COMMANDS** me to do.

To us, **“one strike and you’re out”** may seem like an extreme criteria – and actually the proponents of the revised definition argue along these lines. **However, God is NOT a man, and it is folly to think that His standards are as low as ours are** – especially where the so-called prophet’s personal authority and seat at the table is at stake. **Tell them to be quiet.**

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Now – I do not know of anyone today who has a 100% accuracy in predictive prophecy – there may be, but I am unaware of it.

So... Q: How, then, you may ask, *how did any of these people come to HAVE the label of prophet and be regarded by such by so many people?* Or even better – *How can I get officially recognized as a modern-day prophet and get some donations flowing?* (by the way, the same goes for being a modern-day Apostle).

<SLIDE> Backscratching

well... here's how it all started in the 1940s or so and continues up to today.

<click> a person goes to a conference and claims that God revealed to them that he/she is a prophet even though their prophecies have often failed. They then meet up with someone who they sense is an apostle, and they announce that: "I'm a Prophet and I prophesy that you're an Apostle."

<click> The newly-identified apostle replies: "I suspected that I was but had my doubts; now I'm convinced. And, based on my authority as an Apostle, I confirm that you ARE a Prophet."

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So, it all started with this back-scratching exercise where people with watered-down credentials endorse OTHER people with watered-down credentials. *You know – Put a feather in his cap and called it macaroni.* And that's how it continues today.

Now, I KNOW that this sounds somewhat sarcastic – and IT IS, DESERVEDLY SO. But I'm being charitable compared to what Scripture says:

Scripture describes false prophets as: "Dry wells, fruitless trees, raging waves, wandering stars, brute beasts, hideous stains, vomit-eating digs, mud-loving pigs, and ravenous wolves" – (cf. 2 Peter 2; Jude).

- Wow – that is very eloquent! The New Testament reserves harsh words of condemnation for those who falsely claim to speak revelation from God. And what the Bible condemns, I believe that we must do also or else we slip into the attitude of the Laodicea church where apathy reigned as long as money and goosebumps kept coming.

Remember, unintentional sin is still sin, an attack on the Holiness of God; I'm not ascribing sinister intentions to MOST of these people, **but their intentions ARE IRRELEVANT to the Scriptural definition of false prophecy!**

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Jesus' first plea in the Lord's Prayer was that His Father's Name be HALLOWED – evidently Jesus thought it was important that the Name of God not be sullied by things such as attaching it to false statements. Unfortunately, the ecumenical spirit of this age would have Jesus politely handing out tracts rather than turning over tables.

*I know that not everyone here may agree with what I'm saying – and I welcome a discussion on this later if you like. But, just for the sake of argument – suppose for a moment that my example of how way things are done is accurate – many people will still say: *what's the harm?*"*

- *OK, these people may not be prophets of the status of Isaiah or John the Baptist, but they're sincere Christians and their prophecies sometimes do come true.*
- *Let's not get too fixated on doctrinal criteria. We can weed-out the erroneous stuff and embrace the teachings that are helpful. Let's try to be more open to the Spirit and be more Christian to our brothers and sisters.*

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Sounds loving, doesn't it, and for the most part, this is how the churches have reacted to people who continually & unashamedly make what Scripture defines as false prophecies. But, just where has such a benign-neglect approach gotten us?

- **ONE RESULT** is that people are now free to brazenly promote and embrace fraudulent teachings that appeal to human weaknesses – greed, spiritual power and the pride of life. These vices are now kosher because they come from leaders who go unchallenged when they wrap themselves in the cloak of “*God told me...*”
- **ANOTHER RESULT** – a truly sad one in my opinion – is that **the charismatic churches have lost a sense of God's Holiness**. I know that we have all wondered about this in our private thoughts. We are ALL impacted by this. How can our reverent fear and awe of God NOT be diminished every time we witness His Holy Name treated with carelessness and flippancy and presumption?
 - People are publically violating the 3rd commandment. They are fastening God's Name to false and even demonic statements – and what's the response? These people are invited to major conferences, have thriving prophetic ministries, and encouraged to prophecy all the more until they get it right. God help us.

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- **A THIRD RESULT** is that we are slowly remaking God into our own image. Whoever heard of a prophecy from God that was partially true? We have watered-down His clearly established standards so that we better meet our OWN standards. The standard for the Spirit's presence is becoming emotional highs, new revelations that tickle the ear, and prosperity. The churches are well on their way to worshipping a god with whom Balaam and King Balak would feel very comfortable.
- **THE ULTIMATE DANGER** of this freeway of false prophecy is that the church is gradually being set up for true deception. We are being slowly and subtly seduced. The loss of our sense of God's Holiness and Scriptural truth is a GRADUAL process, but Scripture warns that it will lead to a final deception that may even deceive the elect if that were possible. That's not my conclusion – that is the warning of Peter, Paul, Jude and of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Trips to Heaven

I want to illustrate what I mean by looking at one of the prophetic messages received by people who assert that they journeyed to heaven in a vision or dream. Christian bookstores and online prophetic ministry websites are full of people relating such visits. Most all claim to have met and

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casually conversed with Jesus, angels and departed saints, and most all claim to have had special knowledge imparted to them.

Now, we KNOW that the Apostle Paul DID have a vision of heaven, and we know that HIS claim was truthful, so it IS possible. Paul “heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.” Paul was too humble to even speak of his trip *for 14 years* and only did so when circumstances compelled him to do so, and even then it was in the third person. The modern visionaries, however, apparently have no such restrictions. They write books and tell all – but did it happen as they say? Remember – prophecy is telling TRUTHFUL things.

The Vision

I’m going to look at a specific vision by someone who is considered a major figure in the prophetic ministry today – he is the author of more than 40 books. I want to look at the vision to illustrate HOW we should go about evaluating the CONTENT of what is said. Just because someone who is considered to be a prophet – someone who has that Charismatic voice and the deep confident voice of the Dilbert cartoon – it does not mean that the vision is valid, *even if they sincerely believe it is true.* This particular vision is just one of many similar ones, so this can serve as an overall example.

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Now, the author of this vision says that he received it from God in parts — over a period of one year. So... here goes (and I'm paraphrasing here):

“I have had a vision that began with a picture of demons riding on the backs of Christians - today they are in a sorry state. I journeyed to heaven and Jesus told me that am highly regarded and that I will be in the forefront of a new move of God on the earth that will help Christians rid themselves of the demons. I am to bring back special knowledge to the church.

- While in heaven, angels bowed to me on one knee as I walked by because I wore the mantle of humility.
- I met the Apostle Paul, I started telling him what a delight it was to meet and see him. The great apostle rebuked me and said that it was his pleasure, not mine. Paul then told me that his writings should not be regarded as foundational stones in the church because they will not hold up in the last days. Only the words of Jesus are foundational stones. {*Final Quest*, p. 166-67}.²
- I talked with a man who had died without accepting Christ, and he said that he is in heaven because Jesus allowed to accept Him AFTER death.
- I met Martin Luther's wife who said that she goaded him into a lot of his writings; she said that much of what he did

² Note: I am using Rick Joyner's *The Vision*, which is a compilation of his two books on the vision, *The Final Quest* and *The Call*. The page numbers may not exactly match the stand-alone books.

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he did for *her* and *not for the Lord*, and many of his ideas were actually hers. {*Final Quest, p. 123*}

- I also talked with an eagle who told me that eagles are a symbol for the "hidden prophets who have been kept for this hour." They, like me, are already within the church and will awaken and fly up to the mountain of heaven in their dreams and visions and return with information needed in the church. {*Final Quest, p. 70*}
- I also recognized a man who had been a famous healing evangelist when I was a child and now sits on a great throne in heaven next to Jesus. Jesus told me that – and this is a direct quote from the book - "*He was a messenger to My last day church, but the church could not hear him for reasons you must understand in due time. He did fall into discouragement and delusion for a time and his message was distorted. **It must be recovered.** . . .*"[*Final Quest, p. 180*]

As an aside: from the text of the vision, this almost certainly refers to **William Branham**. Branham was a popular preacher of the 1940s and 1950s and is one of the favorite "heroes of the faith" for many leaders in the Word of Faith and prophetic movement because of his healing powers. He packed more stadiums and churches that anyone else in the Pentecostal movement. One particular analogy Branham used was the

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eagle ministry in the last days – he said that God likens *prophets to eagles*. Branham died in 1965.

<CLICK> What you should know is that Branham was an OCCULT psychic healer. Psychic phenomenon often accompanied his preaching – halos, pillar of fire, his hand vibrating when he touched a sick person. He denied the Trinity – saying that it is of the devil – and said that the healings and words of knowledge were produced by his “angel”.^{3,4} Somehow, in the vision, Branham has a throne in heaven but Martin Luther does not.

SLIDE AGAIN The vision continues: Jesus ‘stood up’ from His throne in heaven for me and He will not sit down again until the last battle is over.

- And, Jesus said to me, *"My church is now clothed with shame because she does not have judges."* This, I presume, refers to the leaders like Gideon and Debra in the OT who were raised up to rule, protect Israel and reestablish the true faith.
- And, did I mention that angels bow down to me because I'm so humble? Oh – I did. OK – I just wanted not to leave anything out.
- Finally, the author says of his vision: [this is a quote] *"when I was able to get to a place where I could write them down*

³ Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 241

⁴ *Forgotten Word Ministries* <http://www.forgottenword.org/branham.html>

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(his experiences and conversations) down, my memory of them had already begun to fade... my own pet doctrine or prejudices could easily creep into the writings... My prayer is that you will discern that which is the truth and that which is from Jesus, holding fast to that which is and discarding anything that isn't... I by no means claim that these are the exact words spoken to me or that everything written about the experience is written exactly as they occurred... ”
(page 23–24 of The Call)

Now, this vision has been studied in many churches and has – on occasion – been referred to by some pastors as “*a vision for mature Christians*”. Whenever you hear such a statement, your spiritual radar should immediately go up. This concept that there are elite Christians who have an elevated status in the church because they know hidden spiritual things thru dreams and visions is the essence of the **Colossian heresy**. I'll get into this in a minute.

OK – **Who is the author of such a vision?** A widely respected individual with a thriving prophetic ministry – his name is **Rick Joyner**. The vision is contained in two books: The Final Quest and The Call. He is promoted as one of the new *super prophets* of the end-times army that will restore the church.

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- I know that it is not fashionable to mention names nowadays, even though Paul mentioned names of people with whom he had doctrinal issues. Some here may feel uncomfortable that I did. I only do this to point out that this and similar prophetic statements from others are not coming from lightweights in the prophetic ministry. These people are at the forefront of the prophetic movement today.

It is certain that God CAN give us a dream or vision. The Bible records such incidents and Joel prophecies these will increase in the last days. However, Scripture commands us to TEST such dreams and visions in order to recognize if they are from God or not.

Now, I personally find it curious when the person who received a vision admits that his recollection of what happened may not be entirely accurate, and so he tells the reader that he/she must decide what is true and what is not. Well, it IS scriptural that we ARE to test all things and hold to what is true. However, if you or I were taken up to the "third heaven" and spoke with the risen Christ face-to-face, would we have difficulty recalling what was said?

- And if the person who RECEIVED the vision can't tell what part is from God or what's from his own imagination, how do we know whether ANY of the vision is real;

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furthermore, what **does this say about his standing as a teacher if he can't tell the difference?**

Call me crazy, but attaching a disclaimer to a vision reminds me of those **TV commercials about certain medications.**

- You know, the commercial that says this pill will help you stop smoking, and then warns about possible swelling of the tongue, heart palpitations, a craving for kitty litter, violent belching, and a strong desire to bark at the moon.
- **Come to think about it, I had 4 out of these 5 symptoms after the Chili Cook-off.**

A disclaimed on a vision is basically saying: *“It’s YOUR fault – dear reader – if you believed me but subsequently get into trouble because what I said turns out to be false.”* Sounds a little like the fig-leaves faith healers use when people are not healed – it’s YOUR fault for a lack of faith. *It’s YOUR fault if you believe the wrong part of my vision, not mine.* This REALLY bugs me – to lay on the reader the entire burden for sifting through teaching in order to strain out the wheat from the chaff is a complete ABANDONMENT of the ACCOUNTABILITY required of the Biblical teacher (James 3:1).

- I don’t believe that when Scripture says to *test all things*, it means that we’re supposed to separate out the falsehood from the truth after they have been BLENDED TOGETHER. After

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they're BLENDED, it may very well be impossible to UNBLEND them. **How do you separate the sugar from the coffee after you stir it in, or the milk from the tea?**

OK, WHAT SHOULD WE DO in the situation we just discussed: we're given a prophetic vision by a prominent individual who states that his memory is fuzzy about what part was actually from God and what part from his own imagination?

- I'll tell you what I would do. **Right off the bat, I would completely reject it as having come from God.** I'd reject it **IN ITS ENTIRETY!** 1 Cor 14 says: "... if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?"
- As I said before, I can't recall where ANYONE in Scripture ever have ANY doubts about what their inspired vision or dream WAS. They may have been uncertain about what it MEANT, but not about what it WAS.

Next, I would examine the contents of supposed vision to see if it agrees with Scripture. I do this because if ANY part of the vision is clearly false according to Scripture – and the author CAN NOT PERCEIVE that – then I have to reject **ALL OTHER** teachings from that person until he/she corrects it.

- You see, if that person can't identify a Biblically false concept, how can I trust that there's not a subtle mixture of error in the rest of his teachings?

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- It's like the outbreak of **Salmonella** at a food processing plant – for safety's sake, companies recall products while correcting the source of infection. Prophetic ministries, unfortunately, never do.

SLIDE: EXAMINING PROPHECY

Now, here's just a few quick screening tips to **identify false doctrine without delving much further:**

Clicks > First: Does it uphold the CONCEPT of Scripture as the Yardstick of Truth? Well, first: this particular vision has William Branham, who was an occultist who said that the concept of the Trinity is of the devil, sitting on a great throne and it has Jesus saying that Branham's message must be reintroduced into the church. Sounds fishy to me. Secondly: **the vision significantly DOWNPLAYS THE LETTERS OF PAUL, which COINCIDENTLY – I'm sure – clearly identify the precise false doctrine in Joyner's vision that the church needs to be wary of.**

The third point: Ephesians 2:20 says that the church has been built "...on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone..." However, this vision has Paul saying that only the words of Jesus are the foundation. **There is a subtle DEMONIC DANGER LURKING IN**

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THIS PIOUS-SOUNDING CONCEPT: it opens the door for a leader to eventually *assert that what Jesus tells him in a vision or prophecy, even though it contradicts something that Paul or Peter or John wrote in their epistles, is what's to be followed by the church.* That's dangerous, but in the last days, this will be the reality.

Next: Is there information and wisdom coming from departed saints? Like the movie with Bruce Willis, **“does he talk to dead people?”** If the answer is ‘Yes’, then you have to pray that this is just the AUTHOR’S IMAGINATION; if not, then he has engaged in what the Bible calls *necromancy* – talking with the dead – which carried a death sentence (ironically). Either way – whether this is his imagination or it really happened – what is said **ABSOLUTELY MUST** be rejected! A Vision wherein a person talks with Christ or angels is scripturally allowed, but not with dead spirits.

Next: Is there an appeal to hidden knowledge that is possessed only by some elite Christians? Definitely yes. The church will be dependent on information from the new super prophets in its struggle against demons –the eagles will fly to the highest realm and come back with knowledge for the rest of us.

Next: Is there a **potential power grab** because of the vision? In Joyner’s vision, Jesus says that the problem with the churches today is that there are no JUDGES. We supposedly need judges

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to help us defeat the demons. Aside from mentioning the annoying fact that Scripture says that Jesus already defeated the demons at the cross, I think it's pretty obvious who Joyner sees as the leading candidate to fill the role of chief judge. And anyone who does not abide by the new prophetic leaders are members of that demon-ridden horde of Christians.

Finally – DOES IT *SOUND* LIKE YOU'D EXPECT PROPHECY TO SOUND?

- *Does it SOUND correct that people are allowed to repent AFTER they die?*

This vision fails ALL of these preliminary screenings – so why is it so popular? Because he is respected, perhaps because he is a nice guy and believes what he writes, and because we often get thrown by false visions or prophecies when the message DOES contain SOME truth and part of the rest *sounds plausible*. But, the point is that they must be COMPLETELY true – *mere plausibility is too dependent on a skilled tongue*. Isaiah said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

- ALL false doctrines always contain SOME truth which lends them an air of plausibility. *All good rat traps have some cheese in them (Jacob Prasch).*

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Q: Are Joyner and many others with similar end time's messages false prophets? According to the Scriptural definition – YES. Are they INTENTIONALLY false prophets? I don't know – I think Joyner believes what he is saying; I do not ascribe any *intent* to deceive from him.

- However, a false prophet is NOT defined by their intentions, but rather they are defined by their inaccuracies and doctrinal errors.
- Unintentional or intentional, using God's Name to promote false doctrine is the Scriptural definition of a false prophet.

Too harsh? If we believe that we're in the last days and people WILL see visions and dream dreams as Joel prophesied, we MUST also believe Jesus when he warned of the DECEPTION of the last days – it will be powerful enough that even some of the elect might be deceived if possible. (Matthew 24).

Well – how do I wrap up such a message? The best way possible – by focusing on Christ.

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SLIDE: The Letter to the Hebrews says: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, **but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."

The prophets of old spoke God's love and character to the people, and of the promise of a messiah to set them free from sin. In the fullness of time, God's spoke those same things by sending His Son. Jesus is God's AMEN to all His promises.

Last Sunday, Bill talked about our need to **GROW UP INTO CHRIST**, to become mature. As little children, we see all animals as potential warm and fuzzy playmates. But as we grow and mature, we recognize that SOME ARE DANGEROUS WOLVES. There are wolves now in the church and part of growing up is to say so.

We tend to think about attacks on the church as mostly coming from the OUTSIDE. However, the NT tells of us of many early attacks coming from WITHIN the church. One of

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the most dangerous ones was the attack on the church at Colossae. Rick Joyner's vision is **A REHASH OF THAT ATTACK!**

SLIDE: Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, warned about the danger of being dragged back into dependence on works or the need for special hidden knowledge obtains in visions by elite Christians that instruct you how to overcome demons.

"See to it that no one **takes you captive** through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ." Colossians 2:8

Some individuals in Colossae were claiming that they had received special knowledge and spiritual insight in dreams and visions. Unless the other members of the church followed their advice, they would be unable to defeat the demons and elemental spirits that were all around them. They claimed special status and authority because of this secret knowledge – there were the elite Christians, the super Christians, and thus they had an ANOINTING above ordinary run-of-the-mill Christians like us. **The Colossian Heresy IS the message of Joyner's vision.** They share the same elements – it is the SAME attack in a modern form.

- To counter this heresy, Paul proclaimed **THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST IN OUR LIVES – JESUS IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND IN HIM ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER.** He is the

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beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that HE MIGHT HAVE THE SUPREMACY IN EVERYTHING.

Paul had three basic warnings to the Colossian church:

- do not be carried away as plunder;
- do not let anyone disqualify you;
- do not let them act as your judge.

In other words, pay no attention to spiritual deceivers with such messages – don't let them drag you away from the **SHORT WAY HOME, as Roy would say**. Christ is all in all, **FAR ABOVE** any angel or demon; He holds together the universe, and we who are in Him are seated with Him in the heavenlies. NO human teacher has the right to declare those whom Christ has chosen, justified and cleansed, to be “lesser” than they in any regard.

Don't let them drag you back into the swamp that you just escaped in Christ.

- We are brothers and sisters, and we all stand because of the finished work of Christ and FOR NO OTHER REASON.
- There are no elite Christians, there is no “trickledown” spirituality where some of their “anointing” eventually trickles down to us poor stupid Christians.

Christ is sufficient in ALL things. The very suggestion that we need special knowledge is an attack on His sufficiency and on

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our security on Him; it is an attack on His finished work on the cross that delivers believers from the hostile powers.

Paul could be writing today about Joyner's vision; he says: “Do not let anyone who **delights in false humility** and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. **They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body... grows as God causes it to grow.** Colossians 2:18-19

- God causes the Body to grow, not special hidden knowledge. We don't need prophetic eagles to fly up to heaven and bring back spiritual food for us to grow. Jesus is our spiritual food!

SLIDE: Paul wrote: “[I]n Him you **have been made complete**, and He is the head over all rule and authority” (Colossians 2:10).

Have been ... past tense. Paul wrote that we **ALREADY** have been make complete thru Christ – you don't need to learn any secret combat techniques for this spiritual battle – we're already complete because of what Christ has **ALREADY** done for us.

He is exalted over all of creation, including the hostile powers. **Christ is not nervously pacing back and forth in heaven** waiting for the super-prophets – clothed in mantles of humility – to

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lead the church to victory over the demons; Christ is sitting down. The battle has ALREADY been won!

No church leader can “disqualify” even the poorest of us saints – WE DON'T NEED THEIR APPROVAL! **Tell them to sit down and repent.**

Look to Christ Alone. “Don't fear them or listen to what these false teachers say.” Do not be intimidated by their gold-lettered name tags and winning smiles. They CANNOT take away your prize in Christ Jesus!

SLIDE: That's a Fact, Jack.

END