

5. The Cry of the Prophets (3Q 2019—The Least of These)

Biblical material: 1 Sam. 8:10–18, Amos 5:10–15, Micah 6:8, Gen. 19:1–13, Ezek. 16:49, Isa. 1:15–23.

Quotes

- The prophetic gift represents the Father's will and lays out the pattern. *Sherry K. White*
- Being a prophet in the wilderness speaking truth to power typically leads to poverty and punishment. It is far easier to follow the lucrative trade winds of popular opinion but withheld honesty results in forgotten words. *Stewart Stafford*
- With prophecies the commentator is often a more important man than the prophet. *Georg C. Lichtenberg*
- Jesus makes this quite clear: there's never been a real teacher except One, and it's Christ. There's never been a real prophet: they're all types of One greater than themselves - Christ. *Paul Washer*
- Learn the lesson that, if you are to do the work of a prophet, what you want is not a scepter, but a hoe. The prophet does not rise to reign, but to root out the weeds. *Saint Bernard*
- The most distressing thing that can happen to a prophet is to be proved wrong. The next most distressing thing is to be proved right. *Aldous Huxley*
- Words of prophecy in the mouth are no infallible evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. *Matthew Henry*
- Prophecy is not given to make men prophets, but as a witness to God when it is fulfilled. *Isaac Newton*

Questions

What was the major focus of many of the messages from the prophets? Since they were dealing with many social issues of their times, how do they relate to us today? How do we respond to messages of rebuke and censure? What does the “cry of the prophets” have to do with humanitarian aid issues?

Bible summary

In 1 Sam. 8:10–18 God through Samuel warns his people of the painful things that would happen to them when they appointed a king to rule them. Through Amos the Lord condemns those who reject prophets and those who operate from integrity (Amos 5:10–15). “The Lord has told you what is good, and what the Lord asks from you: to do what is right, to love kindness, and to walk in humility with your God.” Micah 6:8 FBV. Gen. 19:1–13 is the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. The condemnation on Sodom also included their arrogance and refusal to help the poor (Ezek. 16:49). God condemns those who pray without sincerity, saying their hands are covered with blood. God through the prophet Isaiah calls for true repentance and justice (Is. 1:15–23).

Comment

The Old Testament records God’s direct communication with human beings. For example, Abraham has a number of conversations with God, of which one example is

detailed in Genesis 18. Note how Abraham is ready to talk very directly, and while he is respectful, he does not shrink from openly expressing himself. (An even stronger example is his “bargaining” with God over Sodom and Gomorrah).

Jacob speaks of his “face to face” encounter with God in Genesis 30. No question here whether it’s really God talking! Jacob receives direct communication, and knows it. Similarly Moses in Exodus 4 and later—remember the time when Moses also argued with God over the proposed destruction of the Israelites, Moses being so concerned for God’s reputation. Also note: “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.” Ex. 33:11 NIV. All these accounts are examples of what is usually termed “special revelation,” in contrast to “general revelation” that is supposed to be derived from observation of nature and the universe.

But in the later history of Israel, God chose to communicate through prophets, special messengers who were given a message from God to share with his people. Though often ignored or even marginalized, God’s prophets conveyed not only specific commands but also general principles which are still valid today.

The “cry of the prophets” we are looking at this week is especially over the mistreatment of the weak and vulnerable in society. Over and over again God warns about exploitation and abuse, and that those who are in need are not to be ignored or mistreated. This should tell us something about how we are to operate today, and the importance of helping those less fortunate—both individually and through humanitarian aid agencies, for example.

Instead of becoming preoccupied with some of the more esoteric aspects of prophetic interpretation, wouldn’t it be better to listen to the call of the prophets for social justice and compassion, for practical help and aid? In this way we can witness to the gracious and compassionate nature of our loving Lord to those with whom we come into contact.

Ellen White Comments

In these “schools of the prophets” young men were educated by those who were not only well versed in divine truth, but who themselves maintained close communion with God and had received the special endowment of His Spirit. These educators enjoyed the respect and confidence of the people both for learning and piety. The power of the Holy Spirit was often strikingly manifest in their assemblies, and the exercise of the prophetic gift was not infrequent. These schools, or colleges, were of untold value to Israel, not only as providing for the dissemination of religious truth, but as preserving the spirit of vital godliness (ST July 20, 1882). {2BC 1037}

This prophetic gift rested upon the judges and elders, to establish the confidence of the people in them, and to be a sign that God had chosen them to unite their authority with that of Moses, and assist him in the work of subduing the murmurings of the people during their sojourn in the wilderness, and thus ease the task upon Moses. {1SP 283}

Those who pursue a course of rebellion against the Lord can always find false prophets who will justify them in their acts, and flatter them to their destruction. Lying words often make many friends, as is illustrated in the case of these false teachers among the Israelites. These so-called prophets, in their pretended zeal for God, found many more believers and followers than the true prophet who delivered the simple message of the Lord. {4BC 1158}

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