

WHAT PROPHETS DON'T KNOW

1 Peter 1:10-11

By Raymond White

Prophets are not omniscient, not all knowing, not inerrant. This is not as obvious as it sounds. It's tempting to take every word uttered by a prophet as revelatory and then wonder later how he could have been so wrong. Prophets are human beings like the rest of us, as capable of human error as anyone else. But when they speak under the spirit, those words are from God and revelatory, and therefore necessarily correct.

Here's the point: The words of God are literally God's words sent to us through the mouths of prophets, word for word, and not the prophet's paraphrase, recasting God's meaning into whatever words the prophet thinks appropriate. Revelation is not about what God meant but about what he said.

Here is a short list of verses that make that clear.

***Daniel 12:8** And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*

Daniel saw cataclysmic end-time events which he did not understand, and he asked how it would all end. The answer was basically, "none of your business." Daniel didn't know because God kept him out of that loop.

***1 Peter 1:10** Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: **:11** Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the suffering of Christ, and the glory that would follow.*

Those prophets that prophesied of Christ had to read their own prophecies and struggle to understand them like anyone else. You think Isaiah's words are mysterious to you? They were likely mysterious to him as well.

And then there was a prophet who didn't know he was a prophet: the evil high priest Caiaphas.

***John 11:49** And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all. **:50** Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man shall die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. **:51** And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation.*

So the idea that God gives a prophet a revelatory idea and the prophet casts it into his own words, doesn't square with what the Bible is telling us. The Bible insists that the precise words are God's own words and not the prophet's words that the prophet chooses to say..

There's Balaam, a true prophet of the true God who wanted to curse Israel (because he was bribed to) but found that he could not. Every time he opened his mouth to utter cursings, he instead uttered blessings. It's a long story in the telling, so I'll give you just one verse of it.

***Numbers 23:5** And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth...:11And Balak said unto Balaam, what hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.*

Balaam had intended to say one thing (curse Israel) but God made him say another (bless Israel). That's the way it is with prophets. They don't make it up because they can't make it up. God takes over the prophet's tongue for the duration and the prophet says what God wants him to say. The prophet has little to do with it other than just open his mouth.

And then there was the prophet Nathan (David's nemesis). King David asked Nathan if God wanted David to build the temple. Nathan was glad to accommodate and told David exactly what he wanted to hear. The problem was, none of it came from God.

***2 Samuel 7:3** And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee. :4 And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, :5 Go and tell my servant David, thus saith the LORD ... [the words of the lengthy Davidic covenant] ... :17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.*

Nathan was wrong to give his blessing to David's temple project. He had neglected to ask God first and God, it turned out, had a far different answer for David. So the next day Nathan had to go back to the king and tell him what God really had to say.

Here's what we need to understand about prophets and that prophets need to understand about themselves:

***Deuteronomy 18:18** I will put my words in his mouth.*

***Psalms 138:2** Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

What does this mean to us? It means that we should be very careful when we tamper with God's word. It is dangerous to say things like, "Well, what God really meant was ..." The truth is that what God meant is what he said. In God's mind, his word is more important than even his own name. Now that's important.

***2 Peter 3:16** ...they that are unlearned and unstable wrest [twist] ...the...scriptures... unto their own destruction*