

✠ Matthew 7:15-23 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

A prophet is not a prophet because he or she can predict the events of the future. That's a science fiction prophet. A prophet of God, a true prophet, does not prophesy the future for the future's sake, but simply and powerfully proclaims God's Word. So the prophets of old weren't just prophesying the future when they prophesied the coming Messiah and God's desire to call all men to Himself, as much as they were proclaiming God's Word and will to the people in order to call them to faith. The fact that the event of salvation, the death and resurrection of Jesus, was in the future is incidental, not fundamental to the prophecy. None of the prophets wrote in such a way as to think that they thought the future was important, but that God's Word and will was all important.

God's prophets prophesy and preach the return of our Lord Jesus when all the dead shall rise and those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved from eternal separation from Him. Moreover, the prophets of God proclaim and prophesy that His death and resurrection is sufficient for salvation and we can do nothing to add to or subtract from the salvation won for us by Jesus on the cross. More than just talking about events, a true prophet of God makes known the will of God. And so God sends His prophets and preachers to you to make this known to you that you may believe and be saved. For it is the will of God to save you from your sins and give you eternal life in Christ. Thus was our Lord crucified for our sins and raised for our salvation.

You, O Church of God, are a nation of prophets. For upon you the Spirit of God has fallen and you prophesy, "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Hosanna means, "The Lord saves." The One who comes in the Name of the Lord is Jesus, coming to save His people from their sins. And so you prophesy, speaking the Word and will of God that it is the Crucified One who lives that comes to His people and saves them.

Beware of false prophets. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They infiltrate the flock to steal and kill the sheep. And the only way to know they are among us is by their fruit, the death of the sheep. For false prophets preach confusion and mayhem and lead the sheep down the wide path of destruction and right out of the kingdom of heaven. But they look like the sheep. Only a fool doesn't keep a watchful eye out for the wolf, for he is there, waiting until you become comfortable with your surroundings and to secure in your knowledge and faith. When you are lazy in your vigilance and unaware of your frailty, then he will sink his teeth into your flesh and devour you.

There is only one sure defense against the false prophet: listen and cling to the words of our dear Lord Jesus, the True Shepherd and Bishop of your soul. He is the true Prophet, and His words are true and will keep you from despair and unbelief. He alone is your defense and your salvation. And He fights for you by His Word: "This is My body given into death for you; this is My blood spilled for you." This is the New Testament, God's will for you, His people. This is the way in which you are saved. Nothing else will protect you from being devoured by the wolf in sheep's clothing. Nothing else will save you from eternal separation from Jesus and His Father.

Beware of false prophets. They seek to lead you astray by telling you that it is not Jesus that saves you, but it is your own will or your faith that saves you. But if it is your faith that saves you, then it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you have faith. But that is a lie

and it will destroy you. Jesus saves you, and by Him you live in His promise of salvation and life. They will say to you with smooth words and eloquent speech that yes, Jesus died for you, but now you have to gain access to the holy of holies by believing. It sounds good, even biblical, but do not listen to them. For they are no different than those who snuck into the fold in Judea and were preaching that you must be circumcised according to the Law of Moses. They did not flat out deny our Lord and His victory over death and the grave. Yet they led many astray, putting their trust in circumcision and the Law. False prophets today would have you put faith in the strength of your faith and not the strength of our Lord. But hear the word of the Lord and let it have its way with you: "It is I who saves you from your sins and it is I who has gained access to the holy of holies and sit at my Father's right hand. And I give this inheritance to you for my Name's sake and to the glory of my Father." The Word of the Lord endures forever, accomplishing what it sets out to do.

Beware of false prophets. Guard your mind and your tongue with the New Testament of God. For often we are our own false prophet. We are our own worst enemy because we either rarely believe that we are wrong or have sinned, or else we believe we can cover up our sins and hide our guilt from God as well as we can hide it from one another. And usually this cover-up comes in the form of saying nothing. Sure we've sinned, we've promoted ourselves over our brother, but if we don't admit it, if we don't confess our sins, then perhaps we can fool everyone else into thinking that we believe we're righteous and just. Perhaps we can even convince others that it is we who have been wronged and we will gain righteousness and support by being seen as the victim and not the perpetrator of the sin. And so we pretend to be misunderstood and take offense even when we know that there has been no misunderstanding, but that we have been caught in our own pride.

The truth is, there is no innocent party. We all have logs in our own eyes so large that we can't see the speck in our brother's eye. But still, we try to look innocent and pure by pointing the finger and blaming our brother for our sin. Nothing has changed since Adam said to God, "It was the woman you gave me," and Cain said to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

It is not the woman God has given you, and yes, you are your brother's keeper. If we defend ourselves long enough, if we cast ourselves in the light of self-righteousness long enough, pretty soon we will begin to believe it. And before you know it, you'll have justified yourself right out of the kingdom of heaven. For many who say to Jesus, "Lord, Lord," will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Repent.

On that day He will not care that you prophesied in His name or cast our demons in His name or that you did mighty works in His name. He will care only that you did the will of His Father. And this is the will of His Father: reconciliation. The Son came born of a woman reconciling you to His Father, and so you come born of water and the Spirit to preach reconciliation to your neighbor. But how can you preach that your neighbor is reconciled to God when you are not reconciled to your brother? Beware of false prophets. They will preach that it doesn't matter what you do as long as you believe. Jesus says that if you believe then your fruit will be good, but a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

For the Lord Jesus suffered and died for you, thereby doing the will of His Father. He is the Good Tree, the Tree of Life, and all who eat of His fruit shall live in His kingdom and become trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. They shall bear fruit in keeping with repentance, fruit that is good for holy living, preaching reconciliation by being reconciled to all. Everyone who does these words of the Lord is like a wise man who built his house on a

rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock that is Christ Jesus, the Word of God.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠