

Prophets 101
Exodus 6:10 - 7:7

Prophets 101. In other words, a basic introduction, the starting point. The very beginning. What is a prophet? What is the definition of a prophet? That is what we have before us this afternoon as our subject—that definition. I'll begin that definition by emphasizing,

I. THE MAKING OF A PROPHET.

Here in Exodus, he is Moses. And we read some very interesting words in,
7:1

So Moses, the prophet, is said to be “as God to Pharaoh.” Literally, the word “as” isn't even there, though it is a correct understanding. But the Hebrew says, “I will make you God to Pharaoh.” That's what a prophet is. He becomes God! But not in essence, not that the prophet gains a divine nature. Instead the words simply mean that a prophet is a spokesman for God. Therefore,

A. When the prophet speaks, God speaks.

That's prophecy, in the fullest sense of the word. When the prophet speaks, God speaks.

There are other ways of saying that. Perhaps the most familiar are simply the words, “Thus says the Lord.” When the prophet speaks, he is able to utter those words truthfully, and we have already seen that in this study of Exodus. For example,

Ex. 4:22 “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Israel is My son, My firstborn.””

Over and over again we read that expression, 418 times in the

Old Testament. “Thus says the Lord.” And each time, it is recorded by a prophet. The idea is so simple. When the prophet speaks, God speaks. Look in our text today.

6:10-11, 13

The Lord gave a them a charge, a command. He told them what to say. Likewise,
6:28-29

We then read about their faithfulness to do so.
7:6-7

But look again, more closely, at,
7:1-2

There is were this relationship between God and the prophet is so explicitly defined. God is the author of what is to be said. God is the author of the actual words. And to say that Moses becomes as God for Aaron is not to claim anything blasphemous at all, but simply that Moses will provide Aaron with the words. That's what God does. He provides the words.

And the prophet speaks them. “Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.” A prophet becomes as God. We studied in chapter 4 exactly what that means.

Ex. 4:15 “Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. 16 “So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.”

The prophet is the mouth. The mouth of God. God puts his words into that mouth. Consider,

Deut. 18:18 “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from

among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

Let me bring all of that into our age, the age of the New Covenant, with two very, very significant applications. First, this sort of mouth-to-mouth prophecy has ceased. For a very good reason. That mouth-to-mouth prophecy was always imperfect and incomplete. It came “at various times and in various ways,” always requiring more to come. But in the New Covenant, there is a great contrast with those temporary prophets to the one permanent and perfectly complete prophet. We read in,

Heb. 1:1 “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”

We also read,

1 Cor. 13:8 “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.”

Beloved, that which is perfect has come. Jesus is the final prophet, the final word from God. And final because it is complete and perfectly sufficient. The quest for additional New Covenant prophecy is really a denial of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ! It is a denial of the sufficiency of the Bible.

And therefore I believe wholeheartedly that such a quest is forbidden! For as the Bible ends,

Rev. 22:18 “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if

anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

So we are not to add to the written, revealed prophetic word of Holy Scriptures, called “the book of this prophecy.” It is complete and final. And as our Confession of Faith says so correctly, “those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.”

That’s the first application, that there is no continuing revelation as there had been before the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And the second application is our doctrine of inspiration. This is what sets us apart from those churches whom we might describe as “liberal.” This is our doctrine, that when the Bible speaks, the prophet speaks. And when the prophet speaks, God speaks.

To make that even clearer, when the Bible speaks, God speaks. What you read in the Bible is nothing less than God speaking to you.

Let me prove that to you in the New Testament.

2 Peter 1:16 “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well

to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Beloved, “We have the prophetic word confirmed.” And we know that the Bible is the word of God because “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

That’s the meaning of “inspiration.” The prophets spoke as they were directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

2 Tim. 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

Paul then explains the immediate and obvious application of that. Since it is given by inspiration of God, it “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

So the Bible is no ordinary book, for a prophet is no ordinary speaker. He is the mouthpiece of God, such that this book is the Word of God. And, therefore, powerful. As we read,

Heb. 4:12 “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

That’s what Moses didn’t yet fully understand. The power of God’s word. He was too stuck upon his own weaknesses.

6:12

Don’t be confused by that word “uncircumcised.” The

reference is not to the actual ordinance of circumcision, but rather it is a self-effacing admission of his own weakness. For an Israelite to call someone else “uncircumcised,” it was an insult. And meant to be one. That might correspond to some of the labels that people sometimes use for others, especially what we call racial slurs.

Moses is, in effect, demeaning his own ability to speak by using something similar to a racial slur to describe his lack of eloquence. He can’t speak with power nor with any degree of effectiveness. And he seems to apply sound rational reasons for his concerns, after all if the people of Israel didn’t listen to him, why should he think that Pharaoh would listen!

The objection is repeated in,
6:30

What has he missed? The emphasis upon God’s power, for,

B. When the prophet speaks, God’s power is at work.

I take great comfort in that myself, for I might well say the same thing of myself as Moses did of himself. But that is not a deterrent to effective preaching today. Because the power is not in the man, but in God. And what great power it is! Listen to how Paul praise the people of Thessalonica.

1 Thes. 2:13 “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

And so that same apostle would declare in,

1 Cor. 2:3 “I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with

persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

What a dangerous tendency there is today to forget that, and exalt as great preachers those with the greatest ability in the use of persuasive words of human wisdom. And the faith of God’s people becomes dependent upon that wisdom of men. To their own peril!

That is all background understanding for the nature of prophecy, and it is absolutely essential for you to have and to keep in your own minds. But with that background well in place, the next question becomes simply, “What is the message of a prophet?”

With his authority and identity established, as the spokesman of God in whose mouth God has placed his own words, when then does the prophet have to say?

II. THE MESSAGE OF A PROPHET.

To broaden that question for our purposes today, “What is the message of the Holy Scriptures?” What is it that you should get from reading the Bible?

God’s words to Moses make the answer to that question crystal clear. One thing above all else was God to make known to Pharaoh through the prophet Moses. His own identity.

7:5a. “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD...”

Remember this great covenant name which we studied last week, “LORD,” or Jehovah. More simply, Yahweh.

Ex. 6:2 And God spoke to Moses and said to him: “I am the LORD. 3 “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God

Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them. 4 “I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.”

God is revealing himself! He is declaring himself to be the one and the only true God. He is Yahweh, and as he says in other places,

Is. 45:5 “I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, 6 That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; 7 I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.”

That is what the Bible is all about, from beginning to end. It is about God saying to the world, “I am the LORD, and there is no other.” And that, of course, is the evangelistic invitation of the gospel, as Isaiah continues...

Is. 45:20 “Assemble yourselves and come; Draw near together, You who have escaped from the nations. They have no knowledge, Who carry the wood of their carved image, And pray to a god that cannot save. 21 Tell and bring forth your case; Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A just God and a Savior; There is none besides Me. 22 “Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. 23 I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath. 24 He shall say, ‘Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, And all shall be ashamed Who are incensed against Him. 25 In the LORD all the descendants of Israel Shall be justified,

and shall glory.”

As I preach the word this afternoon, I would extend that invitation to you as well. It is the same today as it was for Moses. God says, “I am the Lord. There is no other. Come to me and be saved.”

Rom. 10:9 “[For] if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

This God who calls you to salvation is a God who at all times seeks to show forth his own glory, and that glory is what he has to reveal about himself here in Exodus. We see it in at least three ways. First, let me return to the whole subject of Pharaoh, and make clear what I hope has already been made clear, that,

A. God hardens Pharaoh’s heart in order to show forth his own glory.

As we studied a few weeks ago, God says again, 7:3 “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart.”

The result of that action by God is also made clear.

7:4 “But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.”

This is what God says. “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart so that I will be able to bring my people out of Egypt.” “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart so that I will be able to show forth my own glory by bringing my people out of Egypt.”

There is this great and overarching purpose in all of God’s actions, to show forth his own glory. He hardens Pharaoh’s heart to the praise of the glory of His own grace! Turning ahead just a couple chapters in Exodus, we read,

Ex. 9:16 “But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. 17 “As yet you exalt yourself against My people in that you will not let them go.”

And if that is not understandable enough, Paul writes in,

Rom. 9:17 “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. 19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? 22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.”

So God tells Moses what to say to Pharaoh, and in response to Moses’ objection that Pharaoh won’t listen, God says, “Pharaoh won’t listen to you because I have hardened his heart.” “To the praise of the glory of my own grace.”

And how will God bring about that great deliverance of his people?

7:4 “Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel,

out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.”

To be specific, the ten plagues. Accomplished by supernatural power.

7:3

Now, remember what I just said a minute ago. God’s great purpose is to make known his identity to the Egyptians. And he does so by these great miracles. The Egyptians will know that he is the Lord because of those great signs and wonders. And so,

B. God demonstrates his miraculous powers in order to show forth his own glory.

7:5

That demonstration of miraculous powers continued and reached a grand climax at that moment in history when God’s revelation was the clearest, when Jesus was upon the earth. And like it was in the day of Moses, in the day of the apostles that demonstration of power made clear his glory. In Jesus’ day, the demonstration of miraculous powers was to attest to the validity of Jesus’ identity. The miracles were to prove that Jesus was God in the flesh!

Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.”

So it is that with the ministry of the apostles, Jesus was fully attested. Jesus was fully and completely revealed and identified, which is the reasoning for our conviction that the power to speak miracles in God’s name is also ceased, with those apostles. The fullness of God’s glory was revealed in Jesus Christ, and the

fullness of his miraculous power was revealed in the apostolic foundation of the church of Jesus Christ.

How horrible it is, even blasphemous, for men to pretend to exercise the miraculous powers of God in order to show forth THEIR OWN glory! What a poor contrast that is to what God is doing here with Pharaoh. For in this case, in everything that took place, God would reserve all the glory to himself.

And that revelation of glory is what we will be studying in the weeks to come, with all ten of the plagues God inflicted upon Egypt. And with the great redemption of Israel out of Egypt through the crossing of the Red Sea.

And I want you to notice one more thing about that great national redemption, made so obvious by verse 14-27 in chapter 6. We are tempted to skip over those verses. After all, they are just genealogies. But let me read some of them,

6:14-16

The verses continue to describe not all twelve tribes of Israel, but from then on only the descendants of the one tribe of Levi, the tribe from which the priests of the temple would come. Including Moses and Aaron.

6:20

Nothing is said about the immorality of Moses’ parents, a man marrying his aunt, but I would presume even before that law was specified that this would have been sinful. So without excusing it, Moses simply declares the reality of the situation. And the list continues in order to clearly identify Moses and Aaron as legitimate spokesmen for God.

v.26-27

In addition to that, the reality of the presence of these sorts of genealogies show forth how personal and particular God is, knowing all his people by name. And how consistently he redeems his people as families. And together as families, as a nation. That's what I want you to recognize from these verses.

It is a nation of families whom God redeems, not simply a collection of individuals. A body, a group, as his people are always to be known as. So,

C. God redeems a nation of people in order to show forth his own glory.

This is a great nation. A holy nation. His own special treasure. And they were a body. God redeemed a whole nation. And today that nation is called the church. God has redeemed a church. And he calls that church the body of Christ.

Sadly, today the sense of importance of being part of the body is not stressed nearly enough. The necessity of being part of that body is not considered nearly enough. People are content to think of themselves as individuals, individual Christians living their independent Christian lives. And that spirit of self-reliant independence is choking out what might otherwise be vibrant and healthy Christian living.

Simply put, you cannot exist as a Christian on your own. By definition, by virtue of your identity as a Christian, you are made to be part of the church. That is how God has determined to glorify himself most fully. That is how he shows forth his glory most fully. Through the church.

In fact, Paul declares, the great purpose of creation was in order that,

Eph. 3:9 "...now the manifold wisdom of God might be made

known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So it is that we read that God redeemed Israel "according to their armies," literally "according to their hosts." Not individually, but corporately.

6:26

The book of Acts tells us about the consequence of such a corporate identity for God's people, people willing to consider others more important than themselves.

Acts 4:32 "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need."

Notice that Luke mentions the great power with which the apostles were able to testify to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The power came not from their performance of supernatural miracles, but by their ordinary spirit-led exercises of love for one another. As they were joined together as one body, loving one another in the most practical of ways, being of one heart and one soul, sharing with one another from all that they had,

Acts 4:33 "... with great power [they] gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all."

May God bless us with such power in our day as well.