

K-536 Defining the Prophetic Call (1 of 2)

by Art Katz

Art Katz explores the nature and significance of the prophetic call, emphasizing its continuity and the church's role in recognizing true prophets.

Duration: 58:55

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:10-21, John 2:1-11, Acts 13:1, 1 Corinthians 13:9, Revelation 19:10

Topics: "Prophetic Call"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. He suggests that this miracle has a deeper meaning, pointing to the future and the last days. The speaker emphasizes the importance of obeying Jesus' words, as Mary advised, and highlights the role of prophets like Elijah and Jeremiah in warning Israel of impending judgments. He also reflects on the value of personal experiences in delivering messages, even when they may be embarrassing, and discusses the seriousness and requirements that God is now placing on the church.

Transcript

What's the difference between Jeremiah and Isaiah, and Ezekiel, Samuel, the minor prophets, and however diverse these men are, is there anything central that runs through them all, that is intrinsic to being prophetic? Whatever the difference is, what are the things that are the same? What is the heart, the quintessence of what is prophetic? So, Lord, we just put these questions before you. You've allowed us the liberty of calling this a prophetic school. The word now is more popular than it has ever been.

There are more things described by it than have ever been, and we have some jealousy about the integrity of that word and what it stands for. And we know that it's only partial next to your jealousy. We don't understand what that Scripture means, that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

What the conjunction is where we know that it's dear to you, and it's foundational to the church. And we're asking, Lord, that you would give us an omega beginning in this subject, and lead us, precious God, in the examination of it, and write something deep in our hearts in respect for that great word. Whether or not we have this calling ourselves, the whole church needs to respect it, and there's a degree to which the whole church is called to be it.

Can the church be the church if it is not prophetic in its own makeup, and what is its function in the world and among the nations? So, Lord, we're asking for illumination and for understanding, and grant us a

disposition of spirit and mood like unto your own, to be respectful, my God, and to feel ever so cautiously our way through this. So we bless your name, my God, and as we stand at the threshold of this great subject, and ask blessing. Whatever the spirit of prophecy is, Lord, we ask it upon ourselves, even as we consider the subject of prophets.

Thank you, Lord, for grace, for mercy, for wisdom, for understanding, for direction. We look to you and thank you now, in Jesus' name. So maybe we ought to take a little survey before we go further.

Where you presently are, what rises in your own thought, in your own heart, when the word prophet or prophets is evoked? What image, what sense of things comes to your own understanding? How would you define what a prophet is? How is he different from an apostle, or a teacher, or an evangelist? Are they still existent, or is it strictly an Old Testament phenomenon? One of the accusations I occasionally have to bear is, Katz, you think you're an Old Testament prophet, or that you're trying consciously to frame your life in what you think the Old Testament prophets were, but you need to know that they're passé. The Old Testament is past, and with them Old Testament prophets. And there's such a thing as New Testament prophet, but it's very different from the Old.

So there's a tremendous amount of difference in controversy that broods over this subject, as if the new has displaced or rendered the old--what's the word?--null and void. But is that the way God sees it? That's the terminology that men have employed, but not the terminology that he himself has given. And we have suffered for that, and Jews have suffered for that, because it leaves them secure within the framework of their own Judaistic understanding.

We have your book, we have our book. And what is implied, even, that you have your God, and we have our God. And it's an intention, or an impression, that God never intended, but that we have allowed Judaism to luxuriate in, and find safety in.

So maybe we need to fight for the one faith, the one unbroken, continuous faith, given from the beginning, and that is climaxed, concluded, and consummated at the end by the same God who gave it in the beginning, the same who is yesterday, today, and forever. Okay, that's good. And if that's the way we see it, then, what is the Old Testament prophet? And is that a wrong way, a wrong terminology to employ? Can we expect, and will we need, men of that same kind in our own generation, and especially at the end? Is there a conjunction between beginnings and endings, as it was in the beginning, so also in the end? Maybe more so, that the issues of the beginning do not change, but are even brought into more intensive focus and significance at the end.

But it's not different, or other than what was at the beginning. It's revelatory and interpretive. Well, that's already beginning to answer our question.

Do we have need of that now? More need than ever, I would say, of revelation from God and the interpretation. Is that interpretation of the Scripture alone? How else can interpretation be understood? Events, like the recent floods. Is that just a geophysical accident, or is it a statement from God, seeking the attention of men? How do you interpret that? So, prophetic interpretation is different from the way in which men would ordinarily construe natural events.

It shall not rain. That's not just saying a little difference in your weather pattern. It means that you're not going to have crops.

You're not going to eat. You're going to experience famine. This is going to be a judgment from God, and it comes with my word.

My word is not just a piece of information or an interpretation, however much it may be that. Now, it's a statement of judgment. It will actually affect something for the nation.

Does that need to be revived and restored? And is that a trembling proposition, to bear not only a word of interpretation or a word of revelation, but a word of judgment? And I can think of a few minor instances in my own experience where my word was a word of judgment, and God acted according to what I spoke, and the church to whom it was spoken no longer is, because that was the word of judgment. So, we're getting our feet wet in the enormous, an awesome thing that prophetic proclamation can mean. What else would you say would be classic elements to be found exclusively in prophets? Flora mentions prophetic obedience to fearlessness, to bring the word of God, knowing that it's calculated to offend the hearer, and not only to suffer rejection, but even the loss of one's life in the bringing of it.

In fact, isn't there a scripture somewhere that says something like, can it be said that any prophet should die outside of Jerusalem? You know, like, it's the inevitability of their fate. They've got to perish, and they've got to perish in the most significant of all places, where the action really is, Jerusalem, whatever that connotes, that's where the end must be. And in fact, one of the last episodes of Revelation are the two prophets, or the two witnesses, who lie in the streets of Jerusalem, then called Sodom and Gomorrah, and the people celebrate and exchange gifts because of the death of those who tormented those that dwell upon the earth.

Their words were a torment, and I have to say, also, I've experienced a little of that, faintly, all the things we're talking about in some measure. How can that be, that a word spoken that is God's word coming out of prophetic obedience in the earth is a torment for those who hear it? Can you imagine such a word? If God takes very seriously the way in which his prophetic men are treated, why would you suspect that? That in allowing them to be killed and men celebrating their death, that that evoked a judgment right in Jerusalem that took thousands of lives and brought devastating earthquake, why it was God particularly jealous in the way in which his prophets are treated? And that's the way I feel about this. There's something in my spirit that has not yet reached the level of articulation on my thought or mind, but I know that God has a deep identification with that which is prophetic, and to somehow touch that is to touch him.

To abuse that is to abuse him. And it may well be that the greatest enmity of the world against God is visited on prophets for exactly that reason, that to assault a prophet is to assault God. How shall I say that without making it sound self-serving or personal, but I know that it's true.

There's something that the world hates. The world hates God. Are you agreed? The world is at enmity with God, but the prophet is the visible manifestation of elements central to God's own being that the world has an opportunity both to identify, to hate, to despise, and to do in.

So that the testimony of the prophet is the statement of God, not only when he's speaking, but often even when he's silent, his very presence is an abomination and an offense to a world that despises God. And that ought to open up a whole train of thought, that what is there that's so intrinsic to the prophetic personality to the man, because can you really separate the ministry from the man? I think that's probably true for all ministry, but I would say especially in this. The man himself, the prophetic man, the investment of God, the shaping of the character of a life, is more pronounced and more significant than perhaps other callings, with the exception perhaps of apostolic.

So that what the man is, is the offense as well as his message. In fact, if he is not his message, we may well suspect that what we have is not a prophet, but a false prophet. So we're getting at something here, and I love the direction that we're probing, and let's go on.

You pay a great price when you lightly regard or disregard, let alone violently reject, him whom God sends in that prophetic mantle, because it's so much the essence of God himself and his own being. And isn't that true? The whole history of Israel, who stoned the prophets that were sent unto them, and in so doing invited and made necessary the devastating judgments that have come. And how are they disposed now, if someone would come in prophetic authority and anointing to bring the burden of the Lord? How will the church respond if someone comes in that calling? Can you say, thus saith the Lord, either actually articulating those words or implying those words in your statement, except that your word has come through the cross? It's out of a death.

It's not your own word, but his, which can only come from that cross-centered place. And is that true? The prophets before the advent of the cross, before 2,000 years ago, Elijah preceded the cross, but did he know the death of it, in order to say, it shall not reign nor do, but according to my word. I think so.

Even Jesus knew the cross before he knew the cross. The cross only exemplified and made visible the thing to which he was, his life was all along submitted. There's a classic prophetic offense, I believe, built in.

Why would that be, that there's some foible, some defect, some weakness, some imperfection in the man or in the message that seems to be invariably part of the prophetic manner? The Scripture says, the holy cross is old. And I'm trying to feel for something, that though they were holy, and need now also to be, will they carry some kind of defect, some kind of flaw, either in their own person, their own history, or even in their own speaking? And if so, and that constitutes the prophetic offense, why does God allow that and even require that? And how God allows or even builds in, either something in the man that men can reject or find offense in, or in the message itself? I know this out of my experience, I don't know whether you can find a place in Scripture right now where they could have it, just know he's there, such a thing, or not. Okay, anyone see it somewhere? Everything about John the Baptist was an offense.

The way he dressed, where he was outside of Jerusalem. If you heard him, you had to leave Jerusalem and come to some waste place with some slimy bank of a river, where this untoward-looking character was carrying on his diet. I mean, you want to find offense, you want to celibate, I mean, you can go down a whole list of things that would rub people the wrong way.

And it's interesting that it sees him as an example of a man laying with offense by the very nature of what he is in himself, who is also in the... Elijah's in the spirit of John the Baptist... Elijah's in the spirit of John the Baptist, John the Baptist and Elijah, and the prophet is yet to come as a forerunner of the Lord in the last day also. So it behooves us of all the prophetic models to examine more the Elijah model and the wilderness prophet than any other, as being the clear form that God will employ that precedes his coming. The very fact of being in the wilderness means outside the establishment.

And if you picture the scribes and Pharisees being sent from Jerusalem to see what was going on at the banks of the Jordan, you know, how can anything of significance be taking place outside of Jerusalem, outside of their establishment, outside of their priestly class? That itself is offense. So I can't say I can find a verse where it says that there's an inherent flaw or structured offense that God instills in his prophets, but it seems that they have almost invariably been offensive men. Interesting that Jesus was accused of

being a wimp and a glutton, so he'll be an assault on his character.

Whether imagined or real, the opponents of the prophetic man will find it, and God allows it to be found. Now let's get at that. Why would God allow an offense? Why shouldn't the prophet be impeccable and above any criticism so that people would of necessity have to receive his word? Why would God allow even the manner of the man, his mode of being, his life, his character, imagined or real, something that people could seize upon if they want, to find offense and a point of rejection? I'm answering my own question.

To recognize the word of God as the word of God despite the vehicle. So I'm not making a vessel of the Lord, but I see it in my experience. Part of the value of the school is to give you my experience, and that is that sometimes I'm embarrassed when something comes out of me that slips into the message that I myself would not have chosen, and if I could have edited it out, I would have, and I say to myself, how did that happen? And then I find later people fastening on that thing so as to reject not only that boo-boo, but the entire word that went with it.

And I pondered that because it's painful to embarrassingly bring a defect. But what I'm sensing is this. God gives men opportunity, if they want to seize upon it, to reject both the man and the message.

And they can justify it by saying, look, he said this, or he did this, or he is this. And that's part of the humiliation of being prophetic, that that flaw or defect has got to issue through you. And at the same time, I want to say that it's not to be used to absorb yourself of responsibility, that you strive for impeccability, purity, holiness, and don't justify yourself in places where you are responsible and say, well, that's the prophetic flaw.

You know what I mean? You're still responsible, and yet at the same time, something that God can and will employ to give men an out if they want to seize it, and they will. But that verse, that blessed is he who is not offended in me. Why would he have to say that? Because there's something intrinsic in his being offensive, something built in by being what he is.

This is picking up from Lillian. He's something other. The world is offended by it.

It's different than itself. It doesn't stand for what it stands for. They can't define it, but they resist and are irritated by it.

But blessed is he who is not offended in me implies that there will be offense, a necessary offense. But if you can rise above the offense or see through the offense, you're blessed. The gift and the office.

In fact, that may be the gravest mistake now being made of calling a man prophet who is only moving in the gift of prophecy but is not called to the office. I can't think of anyone in the New Testament that exhibits the office of prophet. Can anyone? Well, he prophesied, and he was called the prophet.

It's called the prophet. The fault lies with us in thinking that this is a New Testament dispensation that requires another definition. But if there's only one definition, and it's an existent for all time, though we have not seen it in recent times, there's no reason to look for a new kind.

So that's why we're probing. What are the classic timeless elements that have constituted prophets in every generation, whether or not it's Elijah or Isaiah or Jeremiah or any? And then we can recognize their differences. They really are unique personalities.

The quality of the man really comes through his speaking or the writing, but they all share the same label, prophet. And we're trying to get at the heart of what that prophetic definition is, because if we have not seen it in New Testament times, do we have a reasonable right to anticipate that we will? But can we imagine that the age is going to close, where all of the great tumult and controversy of last day's collision between powers of darkness and light, kingdoms of darkness and light, in that final warfare that eventuates from the victory of one and the defeat of the other, without again men of this kind speaking? I can't. And what does restoration mean, at least in part, if it is not the restoration of these offices that we have not seen in modern times? And the danger is because we sense the need for the restoration, that we're so quick to grasp at anything that appears to be it, without critically examining what is being offered as prophet, and in that might lie one of our deepest mistakes.

So we're really, that's why I said I'm beginning this subject today with real trepidation, because of its great importance, and it's charged with all of this danger. So this is an hour of restoration, but one that requires our jealousy and watch care. I know one pastor in New Zealand who sees as his prime function to instruct the church on how to identify, recognize, and honor the prophetic office when it comes.

He's preparing his church to be able to perceive, and to recognize, to give honor, and to receive the true thing when it comes. And I really appreciate that man, and I would say that when the prophetic man comes, part of his function, and I see myself doing this a great deal, like speaking on apostolic foundations, is now preparing the church for the recognition and the reception of that which is apostolic. So the one proceeds and brings in the other, seems to be something of the divine work of these days.

That's good. Someone asked me, I think yesterday or the day before, do I think that when Elijah comes, will it be an individual, or will it be a corporate expression of the Elijah phenomenon? And in the paper that I shared with you yesterday, I spoke about the prophetic apostolic constituency of the church, that the church, the remnant church that can speak the creative word that raises Israel from the death, is a prophetic body, and that this is God's intention, and that's why the prophet is its foundation. The apostle and the prophet are the foundation, because the superstructure itself must be made of the same substance and kind, that the church in its entirety is itself a prophetic phenomenon.

It itself is the interpretive agency in the locality where it is, and in the nation where it is, to give meaning and understanding to the nation of its own events and its own history. Has the church been functioning prophetically? No. But what is God's intention for it corporately? Maybe something that Vern is now touching, but there may well be place both for that and also individual prophets.

And we've not yet answered the question of the difference between the gift of prophecy and the office of prophet. Very important point. Anybody want to take that up? Would we say that anyone who prophesies is a prophet? No, I don't think so.

What are they performing? The Spirit of God is dividing severally, as He will, His gifts, which God gives in a moment. Is that a permanent and an abiding distinction, a designation? No. The Spirit of God can fall on any one of us and we can prophesy, and we're operating by the Spirit in the gift of prophecy.

But how then is the office of prophet different from the gift of prophecy? Permanent, it's given with the man, it's a calling. It may well be that men who have the office of prophet could go an entire lifetime in their service and never once speak the gift of prophecy, and still be functioning in their office. So we're not answering this question totally, we're making a beginning, but it's an important question, because I think that the church today is suffering from the ignorance of blowing blurring these two categories.

We are calling men prophets who have not the office, but who are operating the gift of prophecy, and in many instances not even the gift of prophecy, but the gift of knowledge. So we really need to be clear on what we're saying. And just the thought that has come to me, for you guys to just fire in the back of your minds, Burt was very insistent, we're in the scriptures, does it indicate that there's a place for a prophetic flaw? And I said, well I can't think of it, and yet I know it.

So in that very thing, I'm exhibiting something I think of the prophetic personality, namely, that he operates often from an intuitive place, rather than the kind of emphasis that a teacher would give to the Word. It's not to say that he's indifferent to the Word, because he's eminently the bearer of the Word of God, but in his calling, more than any other, there's a place for intuition and apprehension of something by the Spirit that does not first come to him by scripture. And that one thing is very offensive to teachers.

This is the reason, more than any other, for the tension, if not the antagonism, within the five-fold ministries between a teacher and a prophet. This drives teachers mad. Where did you get that? Where did you say that? Well, I don't know where it says that, but I know that I know that I know.

So we have to understand that, and not condemn, as if somehow the intuitive man is word-rejecting, and is a freelancer, and just will take anything off the wall. He needs to be under the observation of men who are careful in the Word, but the men who are careful in the Word need to make some latitude for the intuitive faculty that God himself has given them. In my own experience, I had to be told by others before I myself knew that that's what I was doing, and that's what was being expressed.

But I would say from the advent of my life in God, there was a very powerful rich anointing that was expressed in my testimony, because I didn't know how to preach, and I never thought myself to be a preacher. That would be a presumption. But my testimony at that time was so powerful, I could go on for two hours.

People, you would hear the pin drop. I mean, they were just rooted on every word, because that's the only word then that I could speak. I didn't know the Word, and the revelation of the Word had not yet come.

But subsequently, over the years, particularly after my wilderness experience, as I described to you, that was initiated by that speaking of that awful message, that offensive message on eunuch for Christ's sake, things were set in motion by which I was actually, in fact, expelled from the nation, from the charismatic movement, from the full gospel circles, and lived in another wilderness called Denmark. And it's a wilderness that drives the prophet up the wall, the four o'clock coffee time, the creature comfort. And you know exactly what's going to be on the table.

There's a whipped cream cake, there's this, there's bread, there's butter. I mean, the world can come to an end. Denmark will have its coffee at four o'clock from the very last moment.

That's what was set in motion. Then we went to Israel, my next wilderness. And there was an agony and conflict.

You need to know that any believer that lives in Israel is going to be shredded. And we were, and finally ejected from that country when my identity as a believer was discovered. So that whole thing that followed, that inaugural message, which one might well say was a prophetic word.

Now looking back, I recognize what it was. And that's why the offense was so great. It was not a teaching word.

It was a prophetic cry. It was a call to uttermost separation to the cross, even to the point where you're the eunuch for Christ's sake. You're divorced from any self-interest of your own that the king can trust you with his treasure.

And so, and then when I came back to the States, in the first occasions for ministry, I began to hear men talk about my prophetic word, or who's the man I mentioned yesterday, whose church in Canada, people would come an hour in advance and intercede. Ern Baxter. I spoke at his church on the patriarchs.

I spoke one night on Abraham, one night on Jacob. I can't remember who the other, some Moses or whatever. And he introduced me at the end as a brother who was bringing us prophetic, a prophetic word.

Oh, what? I blinked my eyes. So there never was a moment where there was a distinct call or someone saying, Vess, say to the Lord, this is your calling and laying hands on me or an anointing coming. That was not my experience.

Rather an evolution or an unfolding revealing of what already was, maybe from one's mother's womb. I don't know. As I've mentioned, Elijah, Jeremiah are distinctly different men.

There's a similarity of burden. There's the jealousy for the glory of God. There's the seeing of the ultimate purposes of God.

There's a calling of Israel back to fidelity to the God of its fathers. And yet they are so different. How would you describe the difference? Don't let me tell you.

What would be the difference between Jeremiah and Isaiah? They're both writing prophets. Both men of proclamation, stately men, oracular men. But there's a difference.

We let pluck out and destroy, which was never said to Isaiah, although Isaiah's word did bring judgment on Israel. Remember in Isaiah 6, speak that they'll not be able to hear and that their hearts will be hard and they'll not be able to be saved. So his speaking brought judgments.

Elijah's task from the beginning was a rooting out, a plucking up. Jeremiah was with Israel right to its final judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem, which he warned about and cried. And he was a man lowered into pits and he suffered terrible indignities.

I think of lamentation. I think of a crying of a man rending his heart, trying to persuade Israel of its terrible imminent judgments. I see Isaiah more as a man of warning.

How does he begin this book? The ass knows its owner and the ox its master's crib, but my people do not know. They do not consider. I've raised up a children and they have rebelled against me.

And from the top of your head to the soles of your feet, you're full of wounds and sores that need to be mollified and bound up. The city of righteousness has become a city of harlots. Your wine has turned to water.

It's a whole lament and an accusation. What's the word? A charge. There's a word of that in the legal practice when you bring an accusation.

It's an indictment to the nation long before the nation is even aware of its condition. The prophet is a seer. He's already anticipating what will come, but he sees it so vividly that though it's future for him, it's already

present.

And then he speaks of it as if it's present. And that reality that he communicates by that speaking is calculated if the people will receive it to save them from the thing that's being described, the impending judgment. But if they refuse that word, they then must suffer the experience.

And what an urgency, therefore, that puts into the prophetic proclamation. I'm not just coming to bring a piece of information or to foretell something, but I'm speaking with an urgency that if you could hear God in this, however much I'm an abomination in your sight, and you want to discredit me and you find every reason for doing so, if you'll only hear God's cry in this and take it to heart and repent, you'll be saved from the very thing that for which I am forewarning you. So that gives an urgency to the message of the prophet that makes prophetic proclamation distinctively different from teaching, or from evangelism, or pastoral preaching, or of any other kind.

And will we need that in the last days? Do we need it now? So, good, I'm really enjoying this discussion. This is what I hoped for the school to be, not just a series of lectures, but probing, examining, and out of our own experience, our knowledge of Scripture, what is in our own hearts, what we have intuited, but have not had occasion to express, being brought to the level of articulation, clarity, and understanding. Because not the least of the reason for women being in this class is not necessarily that they're called to be prophetesses, so much as it may well be to be the women who are birthed by their labor of travail, the bringing forth and the restoring of these offices that have been lost to the church for so long and need now again to be established.

And maybe even to pray for some of the men here who have such callings and who have been lost in the woodwork, who have not themselves even recognized their own calling, let alone walked in it, and need to be released for it because the time is short. So, would this be a time now that I can read to you this letter, like a public letter that I sent out, and I think now it'll maybe have more meaning in the light of what we have been discussing. It's called Dear Carlton, my Dear Carlton letter, because that's the name of the brother who happens to be a missionary in Japan, very fine brother, who wrote a little book essentially defending or justifying the present prophets, those that are now presently being celebrated, whose names you probably know, and I don't think that they even need to be mentioned.

It's the truth of something we're trying to get at. This is not a vendetta. We're not shooting individual men down, but we're jealous for the truth of prophetic calling and are raising certain questions.

Dear Carlton, I've just finished my first reading of your excellent Standing in the Council of God, the title of this book, passed on to me by a brother. Evidently, it springs from your concerns over the phenomenon of our present-day prophets, which is also a matter of my own concern. May I think aloud and interact with you over some statements in your very thoughtful work? Certainly, if the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, we cannot be careful enough in the consideration of the subject.

You have really put your finger on the key question. Do our prophets prophesy out of their own hearts and spirits, or draw from each other, or do they come to us out of the secret place? I could not agree more that, quote, if men do claim to be commissioned, we have a right to look for evidence that they have indeed stood in that place. Maybe you want to look at that place in Jeremiah chapter 23, where God gives us a powerful statement about true and false prophets.

Jeremiah 23, talk about an indictment. It's one thing to have an indictment against Israel, but when you begin to indict the prophets of Israel, when the loftiest and the best and the noblest thing has become the most profane, that must be a symbol or a statement of the low condition of a nation prior to its judgment. So in chapter 23, let's start with verse 10, for the land is full of adulterers.

And by the way, when you read adulterer, how many people know what that word literally means? We know that it means a moral infidelity, a sexual union with someone other than one's wife. But when you adulterate something, what do you do? You water it down, or you mix it with something other than what it is in itself, and you change the quality, the character, and the integrity of that thing. Remember Isaiah's indictment in chapter 1, where wine has turned to water.

Probably it was a gradual process to water it a little bit, to have more rather than less, and then a little bit more, then a little bit more, until finally what you have is colored water, and it's no longer wine at all. So this thing about adulteration is something that we need to be concerned for, especially if you're French. I have to get that in.

Okay. You see how foolish? Now, how can a man get foolish like that when we're on a serious subject? Wouldn't that discredit him? Here's a principle I'll just give you unashamedly. The first of anything, the first statement, especially in Scripture, of the Church, the work of the Spirit, *maritum*, is always definitive, is always the most penetrating and inclusive statement of that thing.

If you want to know what it was in its origin, in the first expression of the first statement, that will always give you a key to what it will be in its final and last and ultimate expression and statement, especially when that thing has been lost over the course of time, like the Church. It's become institutionalized. Constantine did a number on it.

It's become syncretistic. It has adopted pagan and other elements into its celebration. It's a mishmash.

It's no longer the original apostolic phenomenon that it was at the first. You want to examine what apostolic is? Turn to Acts 13 and look into the first statement of apostolic sending. So the first of anything is always rich.

So let's take up now this remarkable thing that Harold has fingered. Why of all the miracles that Jesus could have performed would He perform the miracle at Cana of the turning of water into the wine, seeing that the first has an adumbration, excuse the language, a resonance of something that points to the future and to the last days? When you have turned to water, I will subsequently turn to wine. I'm going to restore what has been lost by your adulterations.

And how is it to be restored? Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. Oh, I love that. If Mary ever said anything good, it was that.

She said many things good. In fact, the Magnificat of Mary's prayer is a sublime piece of poetry and wisdom. But I love this.

However foolish His requirement, however it boggles your mind, however it violates your categories, however stupid, meaningless and wasteful it seems, do it. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. And when they did it and poured water into those casks to the point of overflowing, that He was then able to draw out the wine.

So this is loaded. I don't want to spend the whole balance of our time, but just to get you stirred to ponder that. And so the restoring again of water to wine is a statement of last days.

Isn't that an encouragement for those of us who are called to the work of restoration? Elijah must restore all things, then shall the end come. Something like that. When they were coming down the Mount of Transfiguration.

What about Elijah? He says, Elijah must first come and restore all things. The prophetic requirement of the last days is tied up essentially with restoration. Of that which was lost, of the ancient and the original, the pristine, the first thing that has been lost needs to be restored.

And the work of restoration is exhausting. We're not talking about the restoration of the offices as if that's the thing in itself. It's a means to a larger and other end, namely the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets since the world began.

The restoration of Israel. The restoration of the church to its pristine and original apostolic glory and power. Truth itself needs to be restored that's lying in the streets.

Language itself has suffered terrible abuse and defamation. I mean, there's restoration work at every hand. But I want to make this point.

It is an enormously exhausting work. It would be easier to start from scratch than to have to first undo, pluck up, root out, and destroy what men have celebrated and want to see continue and to be preserved. That is something other than that which was given at the first.

So this is an... Before you can build and plant, you need to root up, pluck out, and destroy. It's a ratio of two to one of destructive work before it's a creative work. And how many of us have the stamina and to bear the cries and the shrieks and the howls of people who don't want to see things rooted up? So it's an ultimate calling.

And that points us again to the premium, not of the office of some abstraction, but that it rests and adheres with and is integral to the man himself. The man is the thing in itself. He's the prophetic man.

His message is not some kind of an addendum. He's not a disembodied spirit who just brings a word and says, let's save the world. He's bound up with it.

He is it. And that's why if you reject him, you're rejecting the word with him. And for those who cannot directly assault the word because they sense that would be doing violence to God, it's easier to deal with the man.

But in dealing with the man, you've dealt with the word. So we just need to see the inseparability of the office and the man. And that's why they're not born in a day.

That's why they're not hanging off of trees. That's why they're not going to be produced in a two and a half week school or three month school or any kind of thing. It's a work.

God invests himself. Maybe that's why it's so integral to God that when you touch it, you're touching him. This is what he himself is in his own essential person.

He's prophet, priest, and king rolled up in one. And he's forming a man whom he has chosen in that image. A man who has not chosen himself.

No man can presume to be this or desire it because he has a romantic fancy to be prophetic. And he likes the aura. It's either called, given, made of God or not at all.

And the whole function of this school is merely to identify what God has given, what God has called, but not ourselves to establish it. That would be presumption. And people who don't realize that say to me as I'm traveling, what, you have a prophetic school? What do you think you're going to do? You're going to produce prophets? No.

But we're going to help them hopefully to recognize what that calling is that is given and to some degree facilitate it by not having to replicate everything through which I have passed, that it's taken me 30 years, and somehow to receive vicariously the benefit of some of the experience. And that when you approach it, you'll say, oh, now I know what Art was talking about. And more readily obtain the benefit of it without having to require the same length of time, because that amount of time no longer exists.

The time is short, much shorter. And this is hopefully facilitating and bringing to maturity and to use what otherwise would take greater lengths of time. You know, that puts a weight of responsibility upon God's people to correctly identify whom God has set before them.

And there's a choosing. And in making that decision and that choice, something is struck that will profoundly affect that believing life for the rest of its days. You know, just the presence of the man, let alone the radicalness of his word, puts a premium of requirement upon the hearer, like no other requirement that perhaps the church has got to face.

What do you do with this man and with this word? To reject that is not to go on with business as usual. In fact, I almost invariably tell churches, you have a responsibility in my coming and the hearing of this word more than you know. You'll either go on in a qualitatively new way from this point forth.

But one thing I'll assure you, you'll not go on as you were before. Something has come in moment of time that requires something from you. And if you're not recognizing it and give it, you're not just going to go on, you're going to fall back.

Something incisive has come. And the response to that will affect your whole continuance and future in God. I believe that.

And if that's true, how much greater our responsibility to be that authentic thing that compels God's people to choose with an earnestness that was never theirs before. That something is happening, something is heating up. There's a seriousness of God now coming to the church that is making requirement like nothing the church has ever known.

And I praise God for it because the church is slack and dissolute and shabby and casual because what has been its requirement till now. But now all of a sudden they have a guest speaker and this could be interesting, he's Jewish or whatever the reason is that however that God has got that man before that people, the moment he opens his mouth, something is struck and something is required that was never required before that will be full of portent for all of the future. There are people who would murder you on sight.

And he said, well, why don't you read Art's book? Art's book? I don't even want to hear his name. And others were saying, I've met God in a new way. My life is transformed.

God has spoken and everything has been altered radically. The same word. So how we view and how we decide who and what that man is profoundly affects all our future, all the church's future.

And again, if we are that one whose being and speaking compels a people to choose, how much more earnest do we need to consider ourselves in our own walk? And for that reason, how dare we give ourselves over to a casual lifestyle ourselves? That for the whole first 10 year history of Ben Israel, there was no person in that community more subject to critique and examination and evaluation than myself. I couldn't say a word without people jumping on it. I remember it came to me, you may have heard this on a message, on a tape.

I came back from a trip. I said, the people were hanging from the chandeliers. You know, it's just a kind of prophetic liberty to get the point across and exaggerated.

And with great soberness, they think, was that literally true? Were they really hanging? Well, I have to know exaggeration is the first step toward a lie. So we need that kind of scrutiny because it may well be that men who are false prophets were not originally that, but became it for the want of this kind of attention to their lives. Because the prophet being an intuitive kind of personality and open for impressions of a kind that a teacher would never permit, opens himself to greater jeopardy for that very reason.

I drive anger up the wall because I'm in touch with movements that are beyond apparel, that are not considered legitimate in the evangelical world. And yet I have wonderful rapport. I see their defects.

I attack their false doctrines, but I love them. And somehow I stand between them and an evangelical rejecting world. And yet I know that their potential is great.

And I'm not afraid to give myself as if it's going to mean the loss of my integrity or my belief. So I'm in that place. But for Inga, it's a very frightening thing because she senses that I will come under that influence and I'll be turned away or be corrupted.

So it's true. And what I'm really saying is, can there be a true prophet who is not in community or remain true? And that's one of the points that I take up in this paper. And the reaction to that point was more severe than any other point I made in this paper.

What a howl came up from men who are not in community situations and resented the fact that I made that so essential to prophetic integrity. I once used the phrase, you remember I mentioned being strict, that the guy not only took the horses, he took the boards upon which the horses urinated. And in a poetic moment, I think it was in France, I said, the piss-stained boards.

And that was it. People fastened on that gritty, earthy, colloquial expression, so as to nullify the whole thing. But do you know that that word is found in the Scripture? So prophetic offense.

If you call to this, be ready for it. And to answer Jason's question, there's a process of growth. There's a process of experiences.

There are heart-rending and heart-aching disappointments and setbacks and castings away, and things that you just live with as being inherent with your call, and you bear it. Here's the one cry that I make to the

Lord. I'm willing to bear your reproaches always.

I'm willing to suffer any misunderstanding men might have that flows out of my obedience to you, but I'm not willing to suffer any reproach that I myself had or bring. And therefore, you're always in a tension. Is this offense something that is God-given or ought-given? And tension is the name of the game.

And tension in here is in the faith. There are paradoxes in the faith. And in fact, my definition of a saint is one who is willing to live in the tensions of the faith.

There's always a tension of a question mark. Is it God or is it me? And maybe it will not know till the day of eternity. And maybe part of eternity will be the Lord playing back the things that have anguished our hearts and then showing us there what it really meant, and what really happened, and to what degree it was Him, and to what degree it was ourselves.

I want to come to the place that Paul came, that he seems to have a confidence that for me to live is Christ. And I feel that way about Paul, because even what Paul offers as an opinion, he says, now, I don't give you this by commandment, but I'm also a man of the Spirit. And then he goes on to talk about marriage and practical things.

But those statements are in the Holy Writ, and are looked upon as definitive and as much the Word of God as where Paul does speak by commandment. In a word, what Paul gave as opinion was indeed God's own Word. Isn't that remarkable? That he is so much in God that even his opinion is as much the Word as the declarative commandments that God gave him to communicate.

That's the place that I want to come. And in fact, I have to say, saints, it's from that place that I operate. I didn't feel any conviction this morning about last night.

I just simply was not a conviction. It might get growing dull and, you know, that I couldn't see it. But as the morning worked out, I began to sense something of the sublime workings of God in bringing us to consider something by the eye of the Spirit.

And it was good that we didn't all rush to agree and come under a kind of pseudo-conviction that we had missed it last night. Maybe it was not sufficiently spiritual. We did not do God's service.

And had to really explore what our subjective feelings about it meant in order to show the subtlety of flesh and man even in our deepest spiritual concerns. Something like that. But to thine own self be true.

You know, the statement out of Hamlet, I'm often quoting Shakespeare, when Polonius gives his son instruction, not Hamlet, but who's going off to university, he's a wise old court sage. And he said, to thine own self be true. He said, neither a baron nor a lender be.

You know, I wonder how these statements have come into the English culture and vocabulary. And to thine own self be true, then thou canst not be false to any man. And I'm sure that Shakespeare must have been influenced by the Bible.

I don't know to what degree he was a believer. So we have to be true to the witness in the inner man. And keep that inner man clear and free before God.

Let nothing obtrude upon it. I think those are the walls that Bob was talking about, our categories of what we think is godly and, you know. And I have to operate that way.

And I've taken such foolish risks on that basis. When I enter a congregation and they're having a ball, and amen and hallelujah, and they're worshiping up a storm, and everything seems to be right, and I'm grieving. I'm almost doubled over, and I'm knotted in the inner man, and I'm anguishing in my soul, and everybody else is having a ball.

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