

True and False Prophets - Part 2

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of authenticity and integrity in the prophetic calling, and warns against the consequences of false prophets and the misuse of language.

Duration: 1:21:21

Scripture: Isaiah 55:8, Jeremiah 23:9-18

Topics: "True Prophets"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses a controversy within their fellowship involving a charismatic believer who had different expectations. The speaker emphasizes the importance of seeking the counsel of the Lord and not projecting our own ideas onto God. They warn against false prophets who speak falsehoods and lying divinations, claiming to speak for God when they have not been sent by Him. The speaker also highlights the history of Israel and the consequences they faced for their disobedience, emphasizing the seriousness of God's judgment.

Transcript

Over verse 9 in italics, you know the way that often there will be a designation to indicate what the content that follows is about. My statement in italics over verse 9 of chapter 23 says, false prophets of hope denounced. Then it goes on to say, concerning the prophets, my heart is crushed within me.

All my bones shake. I have become like a drunkard, like one overcome by wine because of the Lord and because of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers because of the curse.

The land mourns. The pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course has been evil.

Their might is not right. Both prophet and priest are ungodly. Even in my house, I have found their wickedness.

So one of the last and ultimate symptoms of the decay of a civilization, of a society that had its origin in God is the collapse of prophet and priest. And there's a remarkable conjunction between these two callings. Elsewhere, we read that the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means.

There's a kind of a fraternity between religious functionaries, men who may have one time have had authentic calling and have allowed it to slip over a process of time and to be corrupted, find themselves in some kind of mutual agreement by which one affirms the other. But it's in a lie. It's in something false.

It is something that has turned from spirituality to religion. And the consequence is a moral collapse of the nation itself. As the priest, so also the people.

As the prophets, so also the priest. So I can't say enough for the centrality or the significance of the priestly function in the church of God, in the society of God, in the Israel of God, for which the nation Israel is our textbook. And we're seeing a reiteration as we come to the end of the age, some of the same factors and issues that were in the time of Jeremiah are becoming now our own.

It's for that reason, unconsciously, without being aware of this fully, that the Lord had us to give our entire last summer's prophetic school to the prophet Jeremiah. And the subtitle was Prophet of the Last Days. The ancient prophet is the prophet of the last days because we sense his anguish.

We know his loneliness. We understand why he was cast into a cistern, not just as a kind of a statement of the irritation of a society that didn't want to hear his ungainly words, but as a condemnation unto death. There's no word to describe what that must have been like to have been put into that muddy hole that was once a cistern that held water and to be sucked into that clammy mud and the terrible blackness without so much as a water, a piece of food or bread or anything, but just to expire and to be extinguished in that lonely place was the fate to which he was consigned by his king and by a society that rejected his word and therefore rejected the man.

Because you can't separate the man from the word. They are one and the same. And if we don't want to receive the word, we'll find a way to renounce the man and to condemn and to reject him.

The fact that he was pulled out of that cistern by a black man, an Ethiopian eunuch, is not an accident of history, but I think a remarkably significant statement of what will be a saving grace for men like myself or maybe the whole prophetic entity of the last days, that a eunuch who is the least in the household of the king had the audacity, the courage to say to this king, you shouldn't allow this prophet to expire and let me go and pull him out and made cord out of rags and let it down and to pull the prophet up by the most unseemly and humble means of extraction, a black servant, a eunuch, the lowest of the esteem in the household of a king, using rags to form a rope, pulls the prophet up out of his muddy grave. So who knows what the implications are for our black brothers in the last generation and us prophetic men in the kind of a saving grace that will come to us through them because they have the courage even to defy a king because though the court of the king and the false prophets of the king damned the true prophet and loved to see him to expire in that hole, a black man was able to perceive that this is the servant of God and that it would dishonor the nation to allow him so to expire and whatever the risk to himself in coming to the king and asking for permission to pull him out, he was yet willing to make that request. There's so much here that's why I'm frustrated and it is so overwhelming where God's grief is expressed when the index of the state of the house of Israel is reflected in the condition of both its prophets and its priests and that would be a statement for us in the end also.

That's why we need to be so jealous with regard to this calling. If we allow that to slip, we allow that to fall, if we accept questionable definitions or understanding, if we allow a too frequent even use of the word as a designation where it's not appropriate, we're already losing enormously significant ground. Well, in verse 15, therefore says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, I'm going to make them eat wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread throughout the land.

So you can see that the prophet is not a peripheral thing but a central thing and what his position and condition is, is not on the index but the cause of affecting the entire nation and bringing it to such a place of low condition before God. Verse 16, thus says the Lord God of hosts, do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They are diluting you.

They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They keep saying to those who despise the word of the Lord, it shall be well with you. And to all who stubbornly follow their own stubborn hearts, they say, no calamity will come upon you.

This is so representative. This is so much at the heart of what is false. It's a false assurance, a false comfort given to those who even despise the word of God and yet don't despise the false prophets because the false prophets serve a function to reinforce them and give them a kind of thing that they want to hear by which they will have an assurance.

There's always a market. There's always a ready audience for the false prophet. In fact, the greater numbers will run to him than the one who is true.

And if we're interested in numbers and the response that numbers bring, we will already be on a track to becoming false if we need that kind of overt recognition. So for who has stood in verse 18 in the counsel of the Lord so as to see and hear his word? Who has given heed to his word so as to proclaim it? The word who indicates that there are not many who it's like the like the eye of God roving to and forth over the face of the earth seeking that one who is there one who has stood in the counsel of the Lord so as to hear the word of God to give heed to it so as to proclaim it? Is there so much as one? Because evidently it's not the way of convenience. The cheap and easy way is to occasion words out of your own imagination, words that men desire to hear and which you're quick to supply.

But to find the word of God requires some kind of seeking God, some kind of an ability even to be in his presence in order to hear his counsel, to understand what God's word is that might be in the disjuncture with the way that men think and the way that society is going and with what men would like to hear. Because his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are his ways our ways. As high as the heaven is from the earth, so great is the distance and the difference between his thoughts and our thoughts.

Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor? Who knows what his strategy is? Who knows how far he's willing to go? Who's to say to him that you can't twice in one generation afflict the people of Israel with a devastation that can only be summed up in the word holocaust? Who's going to tell him? And so my detractors say, are you trying to say, Art, that God is going to allow Russian Jews to come back to Israel in great numbers? And even from Ethiopia, and there they're going to find devastation, violence, and destruction? It doesn't figure that God would allow. God would not allow people to come only to face judgment and devastation. Well, by whose reckoning? Who are you saying? Are you speaking the mind of the Lord? Or are you projecting upon him what you think ought to be appropriate to God? Don't tell me what God will do and will not do.

You evidently betray a lack of understanding of what God has already done in the history of Israel, and how many devastations have already afflicted that people, and how far God has gone in his wrath, and how great is the judgment double upon those who have had the privilege of the call and covenant and knowledge of God that Israel has had. Don't tell God what he can do and what he cannot do. One of our current controversies in our own little fellowship is with a young, how shall I say this? I want to be polite, whippersnapper, hotshot, self-congratulatory, and confident, charismatic type believer who came to us

believing it was the call of God and found to his displeasure we were not what he had expected.

And I brought three successive Sunday messages addressed to the crisis precipitated by this brother in our midst. It was not that I was looking for a word so as to get even or even to address the situation. It was a word given out of the counsel of God.

It was not a word of experience to fit a situation. It just was the word of the Lord. But being the word of the Lord, it was addressed to our situation.

It did apply to this brother, but he interpreted it as my finding a word that would serve my purposes to his discomfort and would not receive it as being the counsel and the word of the Lord. And the basis for his rejection was, I know God and God would never say that. God would never do that.

Don't tell God what he will never do and what he will never say. Who has stood in the counsel of the Lord? Who has been humbled to know that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and are willing to receive those thoughts that are not for our convenience, but for our requirement, often calling us to sacrifice and to conditions and things from which our own flesh shrinks? Who has stood in the counsel of the Lord? Who? Is there one in our generation? Will there be? When there's a popularity for the prophetic calling and they know which way the wind is blowing and what is the current fad and what is the popular thing to be spoken, and because it's been tested and others have already sounded it and it has found acceptance, where is the one who doesn't put out the feeler to see what the current popularity is, but knows and finds the word of the Lord in that lonely place which is called the counsel of God? And therefore comes the judgment, the storm of the Lord in verse 19. Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest that will burst upon the head of the wicked.

The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his mind. In the latter days, you will understand it clearly. So here is prophet Jeremiah speaking about God and his wrath bursting upon the heads of the wicked.

The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished. There is no problem with Jeremiah in reconciling himself with a God who can be angry, who can express wrath, who can bring judgment and bring it in violence. God resumes in verse 21, I did not send the prophets, yet they ran.

I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people and they would have turned them from the evil way and from the evil of their doings. Am I a God nearby, says the Lord, and not a God far off? Who can hide in secret places I cannot see them, says the Lord? Do I not fill heaven and the earth? Have I heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name saying, I have dreamed the dream? How long will the heart of the prophets ever turn back to those who prophesy lies and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart? They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another just as their ancestors forgot my name for Baal.

The word Baal actually means Lord, and it was not hard for Israel over a process of time through the generation of their spiritual condition to use the word interchangeably both to speak of the God of Israel and to speak of the false gods until there was such a blurring and such a loss of distinction that the one had become the other. And that's why Elijah had to confront the people at Carmel and say, how long do you hold between two opinions? Which one is God? Which Baal? Which who is Lord? Let God be God. Whoever consumes the sacrifice by fire, he's the Lord.

Don't use your words indiscriminately and mindlessly to think that you're referring to the God of Israel when you employ the word Baal. Don't think that because you use the word Jesus that you're referring to the Son of God. There are cults that use the word Jesus.

There are... The most subtle of all deceptions is the use of legitimate vocabulary for illegitimate reasons. And it's easy to employ religious terminology once it has lost its meaning and becomes merely a vehicle for the serving of our own purposes and sanctifies even our own selfishness and our own deeds and our own acts. Language is critical, particularly holy language, the language of God, the language of the name of God, the words of God.

And the prophet is the guardian over that language. And therefore he's jealous about how Israel uses the word Lord. I would say a prophet of our own generation would be equally as jealous and as concerned for the mindless way in which the word Lord is used in our generation until finally it loses its currency and cogency and doesn't even refer to the Lord anymore.

It becomes a kind of a reflex action that gilds over something and allows us to live a lie. Can you understand the jealousy of the prophet over language and over reality, particularly of a spiritual kind? These prophets who prophesy lies in my name, they say, thus saith the Lord. Can you believe the audacity? I don't think I'll ever forget an occasion in Europe when I was at a full gospel breakfast and the speaker was a well-known Swedish evangelical figure dressed to kill.

And he was a Gucci masterpiece, he had silk. And he began his remarks by saying, and this morning the Lord gave me a word for you. And oh, I leaned forward to hear, and not one syllable should fall to the ground.

And then he began to speak what that word was, and I fell back in my seat in a complete prostration. It was not the word of the Lord at all. It was a commonplace, it was a cheapie, it was a little genuflection, it was a little play on words that had a kind of religious seemliness, but it was not any word of the Lord.

And yet the man had the audacity to introduce his remarks by saying, the Lord has spoke to me this morning, and thus saith the Lord. Dear saints, when we have come to an hour where men can without blushing and without hesitation preface their remarks by saying, thus saith the Lord, when the Lord is not saying, we are very near the end. If we have to stand guard over anything, it's the invocation of the name of the Lord, not to justify any thought that we might have or comment that is not His.

This is the audacity that God looks upon of those prophets who are false, and somehow do not blush, and even come to the place where they believe that is the Lord saying. Because it becomes the deceit of their own heart, and they become deceived by it, even as they deceive others. They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams.

What does that mean, forget my name? Forget what my name means, because what I am as God is caught up in my name. But if they continue with the kind of drivel that they bring, saying that it's I who am saying that, it demeans me, it deprecates me, it lessens me, it minimizes me, it changes me in the understanding of the people. I become a commonplace, I become a household fixture, I become an easy errand boy, I become the Jesus who finds you a boyfriend, girlfriend, health, prosperity.

God becomes disfigured, He becomes a non-God. They forget my name because men are employing my name deceitfully. But let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully.

What has straw in common with wheat, says the Lord, is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces. See, therefore, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who steal my words from one another. I see I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their own tongues and say, sayeth the Lord, see, I'm against those who prophesy lying dreams, says the Lord, and who tell them, and who lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or appoint them, so they do not profit this people at all, says the Lord.

Well, you can read that chapter at leisure, painstakingly, looking also at chapter 13 of Ezekiel, where there's another profound statement of false prophets who follow their own spirit. In verse 3 of chapter 13 of Ezekiel, they're called senseless prophets who follow their own spirit, senseless, reckless, mischievous, taking great liberties with God without fear of consequence, and they have seen nothing. You have not gone up to the breaches, it says in verse 5, or repaired a wall for the house of Israel so that it might stand in battle on the day of the Lord.

They have envisioned falsehood and lying divination. They say, sayeth the Lord, when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they wait for the fulfillment of their word. Talk about deception by men who are reckless, taking liberty, saying, thus sayeth the Lord, and lying divinations out of their own imagination, and yet by their own deceit are themselves deceived, even to expect that there will be a fulfillment of that word.

That's the last, what shall I say, the last statement of deception is that the deceived one expects that the lie itself is going to find fulfillment. And we saw that in Elijah with the false prophets of Baal who accepted Elijah's challenge to put up their own sacrifice, and he would put up his and let that God who answers by fire be God. They expected to have an answer, and when their answer didn't come, they leaped furiously, and they danced, and they cut themselves, and they drew their own blood, and they conducted themselves maniacally until Elijah had to come and tease them, provoke them.

Where's your God? Maybe he's asleep. They say that the Hebrew says maybe he's in the lavatory. Elijah even uses a kind of a profane attack to taunt and mock these false prophets.

Where's your God? The remarkable thing is they seem to have expected him. They seem to have expected fire. They actually believed that they were in communion with God who is God, but of course there was none to answer because the God whom they had been serving is the God Baal and not the God Israel, and the God who is God refused to answer by fire.

He only answered the lonely prophet's sacrifice, which he saturated with water 12 times over, so much as almost to say if God be God, let him see what he'll do with this against every human natural reckoning. Let him consume this, and the fire of God fell on Elijah's sacrifice. It did not fall on the false prophets and consume not only the sacrifice, but the altar, the stones, the dirt, everything, licked up the water until the people fell on their faces, and they cried, the Lord, he is God.

The Lord, he is God. We may come to that, and I'm sure that those who'll be dancing on the false sacrifice actually believe that they're in touch with the God who is God, but there'll be no answer. They're deceived, and yet the fact that they expect an answer shows them the effect of the deceit upon themselves, and not only falsely lying to others, but to themselves.

It's a terrible corruption, and I don't think it happens in a day. I don't think it's a momentary thing. I think it's a process by erosion, by carelessness, by neglect, by taking the word of the Lord cheaply, by using the

name of the Lord glibly, by punctuating our hopeful prophecies by saying, thus saith the Lord, when the Lord has not said.

How jealous must we be? I've always been astonished at how prolific and vocal God has become in our generation. I don't think that he says all that much. I don't think he needs to.

There seems to be too great a frequency of prophecy, and that we can't even discern that which has its origin in God, and that which originates out of the souls of men, that we already are set in the process by which we will lose any ability to distinguish. There's a jealousy that needs to be with God's people over the phrase, thus saith the Lord. What would be the provocation? What would be an environment that would be conducive to drawing us onto false ground, to encouraging false prophecy, to encouraging a kind of religious recklessness and carelessness by which we say the Lord said when he didn't say? I think it's the expectation of men.

I think it's a necessity to have successful meetings. I think that a desire to see some measure of excitement and something that meets the grayness of our ordinary Christian life would be a temptation to break into that and to bring something of a scintillating kind and the hopeful thought that it might well be God who's saying. He said, but I did not send them, but yet they ran.

I did not give them a word, yet they spoke. They envisioned falsehood and lying divination. They say, thus saith the Lord when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they wait for the fulfillment of their word.

Have you not seen a false vision or uttered a lying divination when you have said, says the Lord, even though I did not speak? Therefore, thus says the Lord God, because you have uttered falsehood and envisioned lies, I am against you, says the Lord God. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations, who say peace when there is no peace, and who whitewash the wall and say to those who, and I say to those who smear whitewash on it in verse 11, that it shall fall. Whatever is false, whatever has been lightly gilded over, whatever has been disguised, whatever has been made acceptable by a glib and easy use of words, if its foundation is false, it will fall no matter how the wall has been smeared.

In my wrath, I will make a stormy wind break out, and in my anger, there shall be a deluge of rain and hailstones and wrath to destroy it. I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash and bring it to the ground so that its foundations will be laid bare. When it falls, you shall perish within it, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

Thus, I will spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash. It's not if it falls, it's when it falls. Why wasn't the false foundation recognized? Why was it covered over with a kind of whitewash by which the truth of its condition and its need could have been revealed? Because there are men who are accommodating, men who want to go along, men who want to sanctify the things that are, even when they need to be identified as being in error, needing to be corrected because the fall will come.

So I'm concerned now for the great popularity of the prophetic call and the numbers of men who are being designated or called or allow themselves to be identified as prophets, as the oracles of the hour. And I would ask, have they been sent? God says, I did not send you. What is the nexus? What is the origin of the one who is true? There's a place of sending.

He doesn't come out of the air. He doesn't suddenly come on the stage of history and religious society and find the ready acceptance. So I would ask, what are the formative relationships in the body from which these prophets have come? Where have they been nurtured, not only in their gift but their character, before they were visited on the church? How long and rightly had they been part of a local fellowship? Had they been sent out by the same in ascending that is more than a ceremonial thing? God said, I did not send them, and yet they ran.

There's got to be ascending. There's got to be a place from which a prophet is sent. There's got to be an environment that is conducive to the growth of prophets.

When I look back with embarrassment over a more than quarter of a century history, my God, how ungainly a man is in that calling in its first expression. What a mixture there is of things that emanate out of his own soul and are coupled with that which is given by the spirit. God is not going to send men out in that condition who are first not groomed in the fellowship that can hear them, receive them, lovingly counsel them, and say, you were doing beautifully until you mentioned this.

When you said that, I felt that you had lapsed out from God and had come into yourself. Oh, I didn't realize that. Now that you say it, you see the kind of a prophet needs to be in a prophetic context.

There's a church. There's ascending. There's a body.

They don't come out of the air. They're not your men of the hour that have no history, no background. I did not send them, yet they ran.

Not only were they audacious to say, thus saith the Lord, but they ran in saying, thus saith the Lord, and expected to see the fulfillment of their false words. So the question of false prophet is really the question of that which is false itself. I wonder if the symptom of false prophets is a statement of an age that is becoming increasingly false, that they're reflecting cheap and easy standards where truth is falling and where we're not requiring, we're not fastidious, we're not careful, where there's not a church that can send.

There's not a church that even has a concept of sending and that sending itself has lost its meaning. That will be an environment that will be conducive to men, therefore, who can run though they were not sent. So what is the source of their prophetic speaking if they did not receive it in the counsel of God? Where does the prophet get his word if not out of that secret place? And how is it then God's word? And if men claim to be conditioned, we have every right to look for the evidence that they have stood in that place, that they have been in the secret place and in the counsel of God, that the word is not their own but the Lord's.

It's going to be rare because who has stood in that place? How many real prophets are there? I don't know. There may not be all that many. It may be a very rare phenomenon.

How many Jeremiah's were there for his own generation? And the very multiplicity, the numbers that are available today are already a disturbing sign. And yet God calls them prophets because maybe the gifts and callings of God is without repentance and they had the calling to begin with, but over a process of time became false. I sent out this circular letter to 50 men concerned over the prophetic call and I raised the question about whether a prophet is to be determined by the accuracy of his prediction or the quality of his statement.

And I said something like, prophets need to be protected and to be observed, watched, exhorted, even rebuked in a fellowship where men have access to them. But if they are in some kind of institutional mode or ministerial setting where they have only a circle of paid employees to affirm them, where will the corrective word come that a prophet most desperately needs? I think Dale this morning said that there's no ministry more dangerous than the prophetic call. There's no ministry more susceptible to the propensity for error and for deception than in the prophetic person.

If anyone needs to be guarded, needs to be observed, needs to be counseled, needs to be exhorted, it's such a one. But are these men in such a place? And if they're in a ministry where the salaries are paid to those who are around them, they're necessarily going to be affirmed and not be challenged. And yet God calls them prophets.

They still retain their title, but what they are performing under that title in God's sight is an abomination because there's nothing more profane when the sacred is no longer sacred. When you say, thus saith the Lord, and the Lord has not said, you're taking what is sacred and rendering it profane. You're cheapening it, you're controverting its value, and you've let go a leaven that comes into the whole society, into the whole nation, into the whole church that is corruptive.

The priest shall teach the people the difference between the sacred and the profane. And if the prophets profanate the name of the Lord, if they use it cheaply, commercially, commercially, then the word sacred itself has suffered because it has become a device to win the attention of the hearers. But in the use of it, God himself is desecrated.

The sacred, the holy, is made unholy. Thus saith the Lord becomes a cheapie, becomes a cliché, becomes a kind of a thing that anyone can invoke to sanction whatever thought they have as being the Lord's. And that must be the essence of what a false prophet is, who gives false comfort and false assurance of peace and does not regard the truth of the conditions that need to be faced.

He will not see the corrupting foundation. He will not see a wall that must fall, but will rather disguise that condition, flatter people, give them a false sense of security, encourage them, because that's what men want to hear and will pay to hear. And those who bring that kind of word will receive the congratulations and the applause of those who are comforted by it.

But who has stood in the counsel of the Lord? Because the counsel of the Lord is the place of relationship. And you don't go into the counsel of the Lord to obtain the word of God as an expediency. When God called Moses up to the mount, he said, come up onto the mount and be there.

And I will give you the tablets of the law that you might teach them. So Moses took 40 days, neither eating nor drinking to ascend to the mount. And at the base of the peak, he remained for six days in the thick smoke of the cloud that was the effulgence of God's glory.

Smoke is the most disorienting of all phenomena. And Moses, however much he was a prince of Egypt and a Levitical giant in himself, had to come in to the smoke before he could ascend to God. He had to be thoroughly disoriented, not just from error, but things that are correct.

He had to be stripped. He had to be removed before he could come up unto me and be there. Not for what I'm going to give you, not for what you'll be able to employ, not for the expediency that will help you in your ministry, but come up unto me and be there.

And then I will give you, then you might teach the tablets of the law. You know, dear saints, this is an expedient generation. This is a utilitarian society.

This is an age in which we give in order to get, we extend something in order to obtain something. It's utility. There's a lot of use, there's manipulation, even with God.

But the counsel of God is not a place where you go to get. It's a place where you go to be. It's a place where God is.

Come up unto me and be there. And in the being there, something can be communicated. But you're not going there for the convenience of the obtaining of a word, for the goal for convenience is already to destroy the counsel of God.

It's already to negate the thing that God wants to communicate. If we come seeking God in order to obtain the word, we're already on the false ground that is no longer holy, but profane. Am I getting too fancy? Am I wildly speculative? Is that... Because the word of the Lord that will be given is going to be contrary to the whole tenor of the society in which it's going to be addressed.

It's going to come out of his holy heart. It's going to be other. It comes from a God who is other, that men need to hear or to be lost and dissolved in their own wisdom, their own understanding, their own values.

It's God himself. It's what he is in himself that is being communicated. And so anyone who comes up in the hope of obtaining a word only to speak it and is not jealous for the relationship out of which the word is given and comes for the expediency of the word is already contradicting the prophetic call.

Because the prophet is a foundational man like the apostle and the foundation of the church is not the heady knowledge and understanding of its principles and its dynamics, however important that is. The foundation is the knowledge of God as God. It's communicating what God is in himself.

So little wonder that Moses describes himself as being the author of the five books of Moses as the meekest man upon the face of the earth. Sounds almost like Paul. Follow me as I follow Christ.

That's either audacity and arrogance or it's humility of a kind that we have not understood. That a man can say of himself, I'm the meekest man on the face of the earth. It's because he knows that it's not an accomplishment that he has achieved, but a sense of what God is in himself that he has obtained by being in communion with that God in the holy place in the council of God.

And that's how you'll tell true and false. The false is arrogant, pretentious, lying, confident in the lie, expecting to see its fulfillment, disappointed if it doesn't come. But the true apostle or prophet has an appropriate meekness.

Now, if they're going to, if they'll speak with audacity, when they will say, you know what the ironic thing is? They will be accused of arrogance. And yet the false one will have a seeming humility and a seeming deference and a kind of commercial salesman like ability to be self effacing. But the truth of that is arrogance and conceit and posturing and presumption.

Are we in a place to discern one from the other? Can we recognize the humility of God when a man will say that, that the word that he's speaking is the word of the Lord and it, and it indeed is because he has received it out from God. Because when it comes and when it's spoken, it will be with a certain, a certainty

and a certain assurance that there's no question. When I, when I say that disaster will come to Israel, that there's a calamity, that's future for Israel and for Jews worldwide in a time of Jacob's trouble, I'm not giving an opinion.

I'm giving a statement that I believe has come out of the heart of God and the counsel of God, not by dream, not by vision, but by a progressive, uh, which I don't even like to use the word revelation, a progressive increase of understanding and conviction that comes out of being steeped in the prophetic word of God. Because I believe that to the office of prophet, God gives a key of interpretation of prophetic scripture that he does not give to others. So we can read Ezekiel 37, the valley of dry bones as being something out of Israel's past.

That was the Holocaust. They were the dry bones. They were the skeletons.

Well, how then do you understand where it says in verse 11, and they themselves say we are cut off. We are without hope. We are as dry bones.

When Israel has not yet ever made that statement, the nation has never yet acknowledged that it's without hope and without dry bones. It's a future condition brought about by a future tribulation that we need to expect. Well, art, that's just your interpretation.

Yes. It's the way that I read those prophetic scriptures in the context of history and of current event in time. And in, and in the context of the call and the distinctive thing to which I have been called by God.

I praise God that I, that I don't, I would say it didn't come to me through a flash of revelation. It's not something that came in a dream. It's the cumulative increase of a deepening apprehension of a truth of reality of that, which must necessarily come to pass in judgment and chastisement through Israel that will reduce a proud nation to a people who will say we are cut off.

We are without hope. And how do you know that the son of man who God commands to speak to those bones is the church? Why doesn't God himself address those bones? Why does he turn to another and say to that son of man, you prophesy to those bones and command him? Because I believe that God is speaking symbolically of a last days phenomenon that of which Ezekiel could not have known that the son of man is a mystical designation for a corporate entity that can be commanded by God in a moment of Israel's ultimate distress, where word has to come to it of resurrection, power, and authority that can raise it from the dead that God will not himself speak, but requires it from another who's a son of man, who even doubts that those bones can live. Son of man, could these bones live? Lord thou knowest.

The great prophet himself staggered when he saw the grim reality of Israel's death as dry bones. He had not even the prophetic, let alone charismatic faith to believe that they could live. He was being summoned to a faith beyond his own ability to conjure.

A faith that had to work for by a love that believes and desires for those bones to become yet again a great nation. The whole premium is on the son of man. Man, that sweating thing, that frail thing that doubts what he's about in God and that he has the faith and the ability or desire even to address those bones.

The issue of Israel's calamity in the last days is the issue of a church called to be a son of man company that can be commanded. I'll tell you, I didn't want to get out of my seat tonight for whatever, everything that took place tonight was not something conducive for me to speak the word on false prophets. I thought, what Lord, how did I get into a situation? This is not a setting for this kind of word.

This is something else. It's precious. I love it.

I just let me observe, but don't call me to speak in it. Well, you don't have that option cats. You're not going to get your favorable conditions where you feel like it.

When I call you, you speak. When I command you to prophesy, you prophesy irrespective of what you think your mood or your condition or ability is. When is God going to have a church that could be commanded to speak one thing at one time to one condition with a desire to see that people.

Over verse nine in italics, know the way that often there'll be a designation to indicate what the content that follows is about. My statement in italics over verse nine of chapter 23 says false prophets of hope denounced. Then it goes on to say concerning the prophets, my heart is crushed within me.

All my bones shake. I have become like a drunkard, like one overcome by wine because of the Lord, because of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers because of the curse.

The land mourns. The pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course has been evil.

Their might is not right. Both prophet and priest are ungodly. Even in my house, I have found their wickedness.

So one of the last and ultimate symptoms of the decay of a civilization of a society that had its origin in God is the collapse of prophet and priest. And there's a remarkable conjunction between these two callings. Elsewhere, we read that the prophets prophesy falsely and the priest bear rule by their means.

There's a kind of a fraternity between religious functionaries, men who may have one time have had authentic calling and have allowed it to slip over a process of time and to be corrupted, find themselves in some kind of mutual agreement by which one affirms the other. But it's in a lie. It's in something false.

It is something that has turned from spirituality to religion. And the consequence is a moral collapse of the nation itself. As the priest, so also the people.

As the prophets, so also the priest. So I can't say enough for the centrality or the significance of the priestly function in the church of God, in the society of God, in the Israel of God, for which the nation Israel is our textbook. And we're seeing a reiteration as we come to the end of the age, some of the same factors and issues that were in the time of Jeremiah are becoming now our own.

It's for that reason, unconsciously without being aware of this fully, that the Lord had us to give our entire last summer's prophetic school to the prophet Jeremiah. And the subtitle was Prophet of the Last Days. The ancient prophet is the prophet of the last days, because we sense his anguish.

We know his loneliness. We understand why he was cast into a cistern, not just as a kind of statement of the irritation of a society that didn't want to hear his ungainly words, but as a condemnation unto death. There's no word to describe what that must have been like to have been put into that muddy hole that was once a cistern that held water and to be sucked into that clammy mud and the terrible blackness without so much as a water, a piece of food or bread or anything, but just to expire and to be extinguished in that lonely place was the fate to which he was consigned by his king and by a society that rejected his word and therefore rejected the man.

Because you can't separate the man from the word. They are one and the same. And if we don't want to receive the word, we'll find a way to renounce the man and to condemn and to reject him.

The fact that he was pulled out of that cistern by a black man, an Ethiopian eunuch, is not an accident of history, but I think a remarkably significant statement of what will be a saving grace for men like myself or maybe the whole prophetic entity of the last days, that a eunuch who is the least in the household of the king had the audacity, the courage to say to this king, you shouldn't allow this prophet to expire and let me go and and pull him out and made cord out of rags and let it down and to pull the prophet up by the most unseemly and humble means of extraction. A black servant, a eunuch, the lowest of the esteem in the household of a king, using rags to form a rope, pulls the prophet up out of his muddy grave. So who knows what the implications are for our black brothers in the last generation and us prophetic men in the kind of a saving grace that will come to us through them because they have the courage even to defy a king because though the court of the king and the false prophets of the king damn the true prophet and love to see him to expire in that hole, a black man was able to perceive that this is the the servant of God and that it would dishonor the nation to allow him so to expire and whatever the risk to himself in coming to the king and asking for permission to pull him out, he was yet willing to make that request.

There's so much here that's why I'm frustrated and it is so overwhelming where God's grief is expressed when the index of the state of the house of Israel is reflected in the condition of both its prophets and its priests and that would be a statement for us in the end also. That's why we need to be so jealous with regard to this calling. If we allow that to slip, we allow that to fall, if we accept questionable definitions or understanding, if we allow a too frequent even use of the word as a designation where it's not appropriate, we're already losing enormously significant grounds.

Well, in verse 15, therefore says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, I'm going to make them eat wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread throughout the land. So you can see that the prophet is not a peripheral thing but a central thing and what his position and condition is, is not on the index but the cause of affecting the entire nation and bringing it to such a place of low condition before God. Verse 16, thus says the Lord God of hosts, do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you.

They are deluding you. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They keep saying to those who despise the word of the Lord, it shall be well with you.

And to all who stubbornly follow their own stubborn hearts, they say, no calamity will come upon you. This is so representative. This is so much at the heart of what is false.

It's in a false assurance, a false comfort given to those who even despise the word of God and yet don't despise the false prophets because the false prophets serve a function to reinforce them and give them a kind of thing that they want to hear by which they will have an assurance. There's always a market. There's always a ready audience for the false prophet.

In fact, the greater numbers will run to him than the one who is true. And if we're interested in numbers and the response that numbers bring, we will already be on a track to becoming false if we need that kind of overt recognition. So, for who has stood in verse 18 in the counsel of the Lord so as to see and hear his word? Who has given heed to his word so as to proclaim it? The word who indicates that there are not many.

Who? It's like the eye of God roving to and forth over the face of the earth, seeking that one. Who? Is there one who has stood in the counsel of the Lord so as to hear the word of God, to give heed to it, so as to proclaim it? Is there so much as one? Because evidently, it's not the way of convenience. The cheap and easy way is to occasion words out of your own imagination, words that men desire to hear and which you're quick to supply.

But to find the word of God requires some kind of seeking God, some kind of an ability even to be in his presence in order to hear his counsel, to understand what God's word is that might be in the disjuncture with the way that men think and the way that society is going and with what men would like to hear. Because his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are his ways our ways. As high as the heaven is from the earth, so great is the distance and the difference between his thoughts and our thoughts.

Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor? Who knows what his strategy is? Who knows how far he's willing to go? Who's to say to him that you can't twice in one generation afflict the people of Israel with a devastation that can only be summed up in the word holocaust? Who's going to tell him? And so my detractors say, are you trying to say, Art, that God is going to allow Russian Jews to come back to Israel in great numbers? And even from Ethiopia? And there they're going to find devastation, violence, and destruction? It doesn't figure that God would allow. God would not allow people to come only to face judgment and devastation. Well, by whose reckoning? Who are you saying? Are you speaking the mind of the Lord? Are you projecting upon him what you think ought to be appropriate to God? Don't tell me what God will do and will not do.

You evidently betray a lack of understanding of what God has already done in the history of Israel, and how many devastations have already afflicted that people, and how far God has gone in his wrath, and how great is the judgment double upon those who have had the privilege of the call and covenant and knowledge of God that Israel has had. Don't tell God what he can do and what he cannot do. One of our current controversies in our own little fellowship is with a young, how shall I say this, I want to be polite, whippersnapper, hotshot, self-congratulatory and confident charismatic type believer who came to us believing was the call of God and found to his displeasure we were not what he had expected.

And I brought three successive Sunday messages addressed to the crisis precipitated by this brother in our midst. It was not that I was looking for a word so as to get even or even to address the situation. It was a word given out of the counsel of God.

It was not a word of expedience to fit a situation. It just was the word of the Lord. But being the word of the Lord, it was addressed to our situation.

It did apply to this brother, but he interpreted as my finding a word that would serve my purposes to his discomfort and would not receive it as being the counsel and the word of the Lord. And the basis for his rejection was, I know God and God would never say that. God would never do that.

Don't tell God what he will never do and what he will never say. Who has stood in the counsel of the Lord? Who has been humbled to know that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and are willing to receive those thoughts that are not for our convenience, but for our requirement, often calling us to sacrifice and to conditions and things from which our own flesh shrinks. Who has stood in the counsel of the Lord? Who? Is there one in our generation? Will there be? When there's a popularity for the prophetic calling and they know which way the wind is blowing and what is the current fad and what is the popular thing to be spoken and because it's been tested and others have already sounded it and it has found acceptance, where is

the one who doesn't put out the feeler to see what the current popularity is, but knows and finds the word of the Lord in that lonely place, which is called the counsel of God.

And therefore comes the judgment, the storm of the Lord in verse 19. Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest that will burst upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his mind.

In the latter days, you will understand it clearly. So here is prophet Jeremiah speaking about God and his wrath bursting upon the heads of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished.

There's no problem with Jeremiah in reconciling himself with a God who can be angry, who can express wrath, who can bring judgment and bring it in violence. God resumes in verse 21. I did not send the prophets, yet they ran.

I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people and they would have turned them from the evil way and from the evil of their doings. Am I a God nearby, says the Lord, and not a God far off? Who can hide in secret places I cannot see them, says the Lord.

Do I not fill heaven and the earth? Have I heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying I have dreamed the dream? How long will the heart of the prophets ever turn back to those who prophesy lies and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart? They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, just as their ancestors forgot my name for Baal. The word Baal actually means Lord. And it was not hard for Israel over a process of time through the generation of their spiritual condition to use the word interchangeably, both to speak of the God of Israel and to speak of the false gods, until there was such a blurring and such a loss of distinction that the one had become the other.

And that's why Elijah had to confront the people at Carmel and say, how long do you hold between two opinions? Which one is God? Which Baal? Which who is Lord? Let God be God. Whoever consumes the sacrifice by fire, he's the Lord. Don't use your words indiscriminately and mindlessly to think that you're referring to the God of Israel when you employ the word Baal.

Don't think that because you use the word Jesus that you're referring to the Son of God. There are cults that use the word Jesus. The most subtle of all deceptions is the use of legitimate vocabulary for illegitimate reasons.

And it's easy to employ religious terminology once it has lost its meaning and becomes merely a vehicle for the serving of our own purposes and sanctifies even our own selfishness and our own deeds and our own acts. Language is critical, particularly holy language, the language of God, the language of the name of God, the words of God. And the prophet is the guardian over that language.

And therefore he's jealous about how Israel uses the word Lord. I would say a prophet of our own generation would be equally as jealous and as concerned for the mindless way in which the word Lord is used in our generation until finally it loses its currency and cogency and doesn't even refer to the Lord anymore. It becomes a kind of a reflex action that gilds over something and allows us to live a lie.

Can you understand the jealousy of the prophet over language and over reality, particularly of a spiritual kind? These prophets who prophesy lies in my name, they say, thus saith the Lord. Can you believe the audacity? I don't think I'll ever forget an occasion in Europe when I was at a full gospel breakfast and the speaker was a well-known Swedish evangelical figure dressed to kill. And he was a Gucci masterpiece.

He had silk. And he began his remarks by saying, and this morning the Lord gave me a word for you. And oh, I leaned forward to hear and not one syllable should fall to the ground.

And then he began to speak with that word was, and I fell back in my seat in a complete prostration. It was not the word of the Lord at all. It was a commonplace.

It was a cheapie. It was a little genuflection. It was a little play on words that had a kind of religious seemliness, but it was not any word of the Lord.

And yet the man had the audacity to introduce his remarks by saying the Lord has spoke to me this morning. And thus saith the Lord, dear saints, when we have come to an hour where men can, without blushing and without hesitation, preface their remarks by saying, thus saith the Lord, when the Lord is not saying we are very near the end. If we have to stand guard over anything, it's the invocation of the name of the Lord, not to justify any thought that we might have or comment that is not his.

This is the audacity that God looks upon of those prophets who are false and somehow do not blush and even come to the place where they believe that is the Lord saying. Because it becomes the deceit of their own heart and they become deceived by it, even as they deceive others. They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams.

What does that mean? Forget my name. Forget what my name means, because what I am as God is caught up in my name. But if they continue with the kind of drivel that they bring, saying that it's I who am saying that, it demeans me.

It deprecates me. It lessens me. It minimizes me.

It changes me in the understanding of the people. I become a commonplace. I become a household fixture.

I become an easy errand boy. I become the Jesus who finds you a boyfriend, girlfriend, health, prosperity. God becomes disfigured.

He becomes a non-God. They forget my name because men are employing my name deceitfully. But let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully.

What has straw in common with wheat, says the Lord, is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces. See, therefore, I am against the prophets, say the Lord, who steal my words from one another. See, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their own tongues and say, saith the Lord.

See, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says the Lord, and who tell them and who lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness when I did not send them or appoint them. So they do not profit this people at all, says the Lord. Well, you can read that chapter at leisure, painstakingly looking also at chapter 13 of Ezekiel, where there's another profound statement of false prophets who follow their

own spirit in verse 3 of chapter 13 of Ezekiel.

They're called senseless prophets who follow their own spirit, senseless, reckless, mischievous, taking great liberties with God without fear of consequence, and they have seen nothing. You have not gone up to the breeches, it says in verse 5, or repaired a wall for the house of Israel so that it might stand in battle on the day of the Lord. They have envisioned falsehood and lying divination.

They say, saith the Lord, when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they wait for the fulfillment of their word. Talk about deception by men who are reckless, taking liberty, saying, thus saith the Lord, in lying divinations out of their own imagination, and yet by their own deceit are themselves deceived, even to expect that there will be a fulfillment of that word. That's the last, what shall I say, the last statement of deception is that the deceived one expects that the lie itself is going to find fulfillment.

And we saw that in Elijah with the false prophets of Baal, who accepted Elijah's challenge to put up their own sacrifice, and he would put up his, and let that God who answers by fire be God. They expected to have an answer, and when their answer didn't come, they leaped furiously, and they danced, and they cut themselves, and they drew their own blood, and they conducted themselves maniacally until Elijah had to come and tease them, provoke them. Where's your God? Maybe he's asleep.

They say that the Hebrew says, maybe he's in the lavatory. Elijah even uses a kind of a profane attack to taunt and mock these false prophets. Where's your God? The remarkable thing is they seem to have expected him.

They seem to have expected fire. They actually believed that they were in communion with God who is God, but of course there was none to answer, because the God whom they had been serving is the God Baal, and not the God Israel, and the God who is God refused to answer by fire. He only answered the lonely prophet's sacrifice, which he saturated with water 12 times over, so much as almost to say, if God be God, let him see what he'll do with this against every human natural reckoning.

Let him consume this, and the fire of God fell on Elijah's sacrifice. It did not fall on the false prophets, and consumed not only the sacrifice, but the altar, the stones, the dirt, everything. Licked up the water until the people fell on their faces, and they cried, the Lord, he is God.

The Lord, he is God. We may come to that, and I'm sure that those who'll be dancing on the false sacrifice actually believe that they're in touch with the God who is God, but there'll be no answer. They're deceived, and yet the fact that they expect an answer shows them the effect of the deceit upon themselves, and not only falsely lying to others, but to themselves.

It's a terrible corruption, and I don't think it happens in a day. I don't think it's a momentary thing. I think it's a process by erosion, by carelessness, by neglect, by taking the word of the Lord cheaply, by using the name of the Lord glibly, by punctuating our hopeful prophecies, by saying, thus saith the Lord, when the Lord has not said.

How jealous must we be? I've always been astonished at how prolific and vocal God has become in our generation. I don't think that he says all that much. I don't think he needs to, that there seems to be too great a frequency of prophecy, and that we can't even discern that which has its origin in God, and that which originates out of the souls of men, that we already are set in the process by which we will lose any ability to distinguish.

There's a jealousy that needs to be with God's people over the phrase, thus saith the Lord. What would be the provocation? What would be an environment that would be conducive to drawing us onto false ground, to encouraging false prophecy, to encouraging a kind of religious recklessness and carelessness by which we say the Lord said when he didn't say? I think it's the expectation of men. I think it's a necessity to have successful meetings.

I think a desire to see some measure of excitement and something that meets the grayness of our ordinary Christian life would be a temptation to break into that and to bring something of a scintillating kind and the hopeful thought that it might well be God who's saying. He said, but I did not send them, but yet they ran. I did not give them a word, yet they spoke.

They envisioned falsehood and lying divination. They say, thus saith the Lord when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they wait for the fulfillment of their word. Have you not seen a false vision or uttered a lying divination when you have said, says the Lord, even though I did not speak? Therefore, thus says the Lord God, because you have uttered falsehood and envisioned lies, I am against you, says the Lord God.

My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations, who say peace when there is no peace, and who whitewash the wall and say to those who, and I say to those who smear whitewash on it in verse 11 that it shall fall. Whatever is false, whatever has been lightly gilded over, whatever has been disguised, whatever has been made acceptable by a glib and easy use of words, if its foundation is false, it will fall no matter how the wall has been smeared. In my wrath I will make a stormy wind break out, and in my anger there shall be a deluge of rain and hailstones and wrath to destroy it.

I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash and bring it to the ground so that its foundations will be laid bare. When it falls, you shall perish within it, and you shall know that I am the Lord. Thus I will spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash.

It's not if it falls, it's when it falls. Why wasn't the false foundation recognized? Why was it covered over with a kind of whitewash by which the truth of its condition and its need could have been revealed? Because there are men who are accommodating, men who want to go along, men who want to sanctify the things that are, even when they need to be identified as being in error, needing to be corrected because the fall will come. So I'm concerned now for the great popularity of the prophetic call and the numbers of men who are being designated or called or allow themselves to be identified as prophets, as the oracles of the hour.

And I would ask, have they been sent? God says, I did not send you. What is the nexus? What is the origin of the one who is true? There's a place of sending. He doesn't come out of the air.

He doesn't suddenly come on the stage of history and religious society and find the ready acceptance. So I would ask, what are the formative relationships in the body from which these prophets have come? Where have they been nurtured, not only in their gift, but their character, before they were visited on the church? How long and rightly have they been part of a local fellowship? Had they been sent out by the same in ascending that is more than a ceremonial thing? God said, I did not send them. And yet they ran.

There's got to be ascending. There's got to be a place from which a prophet is sent. There's got to be an environment that is conducive to the growth of prophets.

When I look back with embarrassment over a more than quarter of a century history, my God, how ungainly a man is in that calling, in its first expression. What a mixture there is of things that emanate out of his own soul and are coupled with that which is given by the Spirit. God is not going to send men out in that condition who are first not groomed in the fellowship that can hear them, receive them, lovingly counsel them, and say, you were doing beautifully until you mentioned this.

When you said that, I felt that you had lapsed out from God and had come into yourself. Oh, I didn't realize that. Now that you say it, you see the kind of... A prophet needs to be in a prophetic context.

There's a church. There's ascending. There's a body.

They don't come out of the air. They're not your men of the hour that have no history, no background. I did not send them, yet they ran.

Not only were they audacious to say, thus saith the Lord, but they ran in saying, thus saith the Lord, and expected to see the fulfillment of their false words. So the question of false prophet is really the question of that which is false itself. I wonder if the symptom of false prophets is a statement of an age that is becoming increasingly false, that they're reflecting cheap and easy standards where truth is falling and where we're not requiring, we're not fastidious, we're not careful, where there's not a church that can send.

There's not a church that even has a concept of sending and that sending itself has lost its meaning. That will be an environment that will be conducive to men, therefore, who can run though they were not sent. So what is the source of their prophetic speaking if they did not receive it in the counsel of God? Where does the prophet get his word if not out of that secret place? And how is it then God's word? And if men claim to be conditioned, we have every right to look for the evidence that they have stood in that place, that they have been in the secret place and in the counsel of God, that the word is not their own but the Lord's.

It's going to be rare because who has stood in that place? How many real prophets are there? I don't know. There may not be all that many. It may be a very rare phenomenon.

How many Jeremiah's were there for their, for his own generation? And the very multiplicity, the numbers that are available today are already a disturbing sign. And yet God calls them prophets because maybe the gifts and callings of God are without, God is without repentance. And they had the calling to begin with, but over a process of time became false.

I went, I sent out this circular letter to 50 men concerned over the prophetic call. And I raised the question about whether a prophet is to be determined by the accuracy of his prediction or the quality of his statement. And I said something like prophets need to be protected and to be observed, watched, exhorted, even rebuked in a fellowship where men have access to them.

But if they are in some kind of institutional mode or ministerial setting where they have only a circle of paid employees to affirm them, where will the corrective word come that a prophet most desperately needs? I think Dale this morning said that there's no ministry more dangerous than the prophetic call. There's no ministry more susceptible to the propensity for error and for deception than in the prophetic person. If anyone needs to be guarded, needs to be observed, needs to be counseled, needs to be exhorted, it's such a one.

But are these men in such a place? And if they're in a ministry where the salaries are paid to those who are around them, they're necessarily going to be affirmed and not be challenged. And yet God calls them prophets. They still retain their title, but what they are performing under that title in God's sight is an abomination because there's nothing more profane when the sacred is no longer sacred.

When you say, thus saith the Lord, and the Lord has not said, you're taking what is sacred and rendering it profane. You're cheapening it, you're controverting its value, and you've let go a leaven that comes into the whole society, into the whole nation, into the whole church that is corruptive. The priest shall teach the people the difference between the sacred and the profane.

And if the prophets profanate the name of the Lord, if they use it cheaply, commercially, commercially, then the word sacred itself has suffered because it has become a device to win the attention of the hearers, but in the use of it, God himself is desecrated. The sacred, the holy is made unholy. Thus saith the Lord becomes a cheapy, becomes a cliché, becomes a kind of a thing that anyone can invoke to sanction whatever thought they have as being the Lord's.

And that must be the essence of what a false prophet is, who gives false comfort and false assurance of peace, and does not regard the truth of the conditions that need to be faced. He will not see the corrupting foundation. He will not see a wall that must fall, but will rather disguise that condition, flatter people, give them a false sense of security, encourage them, because that's what men want to hear and will pay to hear.

And those who bring that kind of word will receive the congratulations and the applause of those who are comforted by it. But who has stood in the counsel of the Lord? Because the counsel of the Lord is the place of relationship. And you don't go into the counsel of the Lord to obtain the word of God as an expediency.

When God called Moses up to the mount, he said, come up onto the mount and be there. And I will give you the tablets of the law that you might teach them. So Moses took 40 days, neither eating nor drinking to ascend to the mount.

And at the base of the peak, he remained for six days in the thick smoke of the cloud that was the effulgence of God's glory. Smoke is the most disorienting of all phenomena. And Moses, however much he was a prince of Egypt and a Levitical giant in himself, had to come in to the smoke before he could ascend to God.

He had to be thoroughly disoriented, not just from error, but things that are correct. He had to be stripped. He had to be removed before he could come up unto me and be there.

Not for what I'm going to give you, not for what you'll be able to employ, not for the expediency that will help you in your ministry, but come up unto me and be there. And then I will give you, then you might teach the tablets of the law. You know, dear saints, this is an expedient generation.

This is a utilitarian society. This is an age in which we give in order to get, we extend something in order to obtain something. It's utility.

There's a lot of use, there's manipulation, even with God. But the counsel of God is not a place where you go to get. It's a place where you go to be.

It's a place where God is. Come up unto me and be there. And in the being there, something can be communicated.

But you're not going there for the convenience of the obtaining of a word, for the goal for convenience is already to destroy the counsel of God. It's already to negate the thing that God wants to communicate. If we come seeking God in order to obtain the word, we're already on the false ground that is no longer holy, but profane.

Am I getting too fancy? Am I wildly speculative? Is that... Am I getting too fancy? Because the word of the Lord that will be given is going to be contrary to the whole tenor of the society in which it's going to be addressed. It's going to come out of his holy heart. It's going to be other.

It comes from a God who is other, that men need to hear or to be lost and dissolved in their own wisdom, their own understanding, their own values. It's God himself. It's what he is in himself that is being communicated.

And so anyone who comes up in the hope of obtaining a word only to speak it and is not jealous for the relationship out of which the word is given and comes for the expediency of the word is already contradicting the prophetic call. Because the prophet is a foundational man like the apostle. And the foundation of the church is not the heady knowledge and understanding of its principles and its dynamics, however important that is.

The foundation is the knowledge of God as God. It's communicating what God is in himself. So little wonder that Moses describes himself as being the author of the five books of Moses as the meekest man upon the face of the earth.

Sounds almost like Paul. Follow me as I follow Christ. That's either audacity and arrogance or it's humility of a kind that we have not understood.

That a man can say of himself, I'm the meekest man on the face of the earth. It's because he knows that it's not an accomplishment that he has achieved, but a sense of what God is in himself that he has obtained by being in communion with that God in the holy place in the council of God. And that's how you'll tell true and false.

The false is arrogant, pretentious, lying, confident in the lie, expecting to see its fulfillment, disappointed if it doesn't come. But the true apostle or prophet has an appropriate meekness. Now, if they'll speak with audacity, when they will say, thus saith the Lord, you know what the ironic thing is? They will be accused of arrogance.

And yet the false one will have a seeming humility and a seeming deference and a kind of commercial salesman-like ability to be self-effacing. But the truth of that is arrogance and conceit and posturing and presumption. Are we in a place to discern one from the other? Can we recognize the humility of God when a man will say that the word that he's speaking is the word of the Lord? And it indeed is because he has received it out from God.

Because when it comes and when it's spoken, it will be with a certain certainty and a certain assurance that there's no question. When I say that disaster will come to Israel, that there's a calamity that's future,

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7243.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/true-and-false-prophets-part-2/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net