

Spirit of a True Prophet - Part 1

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of loneliness and isolation as a prophet, and the need for prayer and the power of the Holy Ghost to experience supernatural birth and revival.

Duration: 30:11

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-6, Matthew 6:33, Luke 2:30-32, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Prophet"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher highlights the historical context of the Israelites' captivity under Pharaoh for 400 years and their subsequent periods of captivity. He emphasizes that despite these experiences, the Israelites failed to learn their lesson and continued in ritualism and formality without God's intervention. The preacher draws a parallel to America, suggesting that if God were to allow 400 years of darkness, the nation would not survive. He also mentions the fear of suffering as a reason why some people desire Jesus to come today. The sermon concludes with a story about a man who witnessed the persecution of Christians in China and calls for a revival or death, emphasizing the importance of living in a state of revival.

Transcript

To the effect that hardened criminals, some of them who have fought until their bodies were bruised and bloody, some of them who have been pistol-whipped, some of them who have broken almost every law of God and man, and feared neither God nor man, have feared one thing. And that one thing was when the judge said that they were to be sentenced to jail, but in solitary confinement. And one very famous or really notorious criminal sank on his knees and raised his hands and begged the judge to lengthen his period behind the bars, but let him be in company with other men.

Because he said if I'm alone year after year after year, I'm afraid that I can't stand the loneliness. Let him be in company with other men. Because he said if I'm alone year after year after year, I'm afraid that I can't stand the loneliness.

Prophets are a strange breed of men. They're God's emergency men for crisis hours. And the price of being a prophet is that a man has to live alone.

All God's great men have been very, very lonely men. A lady once asked me what university I went to, and I said I went to Bush University. She said well I never heard of anybody from Bush University.

Who was the student there? And he spent 40 years on the backside of the wall. And not only does he send a man like that, but the other prophets in the word of God were very strange men. Isaiah was prepared to walk around the streets of Jerusalem barefooted for three years.

Well that doesn't sound strange except you remember perhaps that when the prodigal came home, his father said put shoes on his feet because no slaves ever wore shoes. That's why the colored people used to sing so joyously, all God's children got shoes. I got shoes, you got shoes.

Gonna walk all over God's heaven in shoes because they never had shoes. And Isaiah was prepared to be identified as a slave. Another man was prepared to lay on his right side for a period of time.

Another man like Jeremiah walked down the street with a yoke around his neck and said the nation was in bondage to sin as he was in bondage to that yoke. And tonight I want to think about a man that lived a very very lonely life. I said very often that when I turn over the pages of the Bible that one of the most challenging pages is the white page that divides the testaments.

It doesn't say anything, it says one of the most eloquent things that it's possible to say. It's a white page but it covers a period of 400 years of total darkness. 400 years of darkness without any light, 400 years of silence without any prophetic voice.

If I were to say to you tonight I'll give you paper and pencil and you can write and give me from your knowledge of the word of God who was the greatest man that ever lived outside of Jesus Christ, I guess you might come up with Moses or you might come up with Paul and you'll be wrong because the greatest character reader of all time was Jesus himself and he said that the greatest man that was ever born of woman was John Baptist. A man who spent some 20 years there in the fastness of the desert. A lonely man, a strange man.

His father was a priest of the Cross of Adia. There were 20,000 priests at that time and his father was a member I think of the 12th caste or the 8th caste and it's an amazing thing when you think of it, at least to me it is. You know just like the tide has to go the farthest out before it can return, we as individuals, we as churches, we as nations, as I see the picture, have to come to a place of recognizing our total barrenness before ever we bring forth life.

And you can tell me of a little spark of revival in your church, thank God for it, but you'll never convince me there's any revival in America. I'm too smart to know that. And I'll bring you statistics that will drown you.

And I'll bring you evidence that makes us realize the fact that we've all been sold. And the great need in America tonight, I'm convinced of this, as good as Bible schools are with their assembly lines and producing their preachers, the greatest need in America tonight is prophets. And as Deer Trooper used to say, if you're going to be a prophet, brother, you better settle.

Or it was Dr. Parker who originally said, if you're going to be a prophet, you'll have to preach repentance and before you start, dedicate your head to heaven because you won't last much more than six months maybe. John the Baptist himself didn't. This man's father then was a very wonderful man and he had a very wonderful wife.

But she was a barren woman. It was a barren woman that brought to birth Samuel. It was a barren woman that brought to birth the amazing man by the name of Samson.

It was a woman who one day was no longer magnetized by her beauty, was no longer fascinated by her beautiful garments, was no longer adored or interested in the adoration of the people because unquestionably she was the queen of the tribe. But one day she came unto herself in prostration and I think with tears in her eyes and her hair no longer beautifully done and she fell down before her husband and said, Jacob, give me cure. And I say to you with all the power of my hands and being tonight that I think the time has come when we share.

Wonderful cry. When you remember he said, give me liberty or give me death. But if you've got an ounce of Christ in you, this is the hour to say, give me a revival or give me death.

Because if we can live without revival, then we're not where God wants us to be. Our brother spoke his 13th word. I wish you'd heard it this morning.

Get a tape. If you don't get any of mine, I wouldn't care. That message on Hosea, brother that, in the saliva of whoever hides out.

That brother showed us, brother Conrad Morel whose book is on the table there, he showed us, I believe, exactly where the nation is today. And the judgments that are going to fall if we don't get revival and maybe it's but Christ and chaos. Not revival or revolution, but revival and revolution.

Not revival without concentration camps. Maybe the only place you'll get it is in concentration camps. But as sure as that's my hand, I'm sure God is going to give us revival.

And this man had prayed and his wife had prayed. And they decided that God would give them just one thing that seemed very natural. The husband was given a very wonderful privilege because only once in the life of a priest did he go into the temple and minister in the way that Zacharias was ministering on this occasion.

After all, there was a long line of 20,000 priests and most of them wouldn't get in on it anyhow. And so just once in his priestly life, when at nine o'clock in the morning on the temple porch of Herod, because Herod financed the building of it, some men stood with their trumpets to heaven and sounded a blast and the court opened its doors and the priest went down the aisle there and as he went down nervous under the burden of his garments, doing something that was unrehearsed, doing something he would never do again, he walked up there to the front of the temple and as he walked there I say I believe nervous. I believe he was maybe just shaking from head to foot.

And lo behold as he got there right to the side of the temple, there was an angel standing there. Well don't you think some of you preachers would be startled if an angel came and stood at the side of you next Sunday morning while you were preaching? I think I might. And as soon as he saw the angel his nervousness was intensified and the angel said, I am Gabriel.

Gabriel sent from the presence of God and he said he stood on the right side of the altar because when he was going to speak to the nation he stood on the left side of the altar. But here he is on the right side of the altar and he says, fear not thy prayer is heard, thy wife Elizabeth shall... And I think that some of the greatest shocks you and I could have would be to have our prayers answered. We're so used to praying and nothing happened that if they got answered we'd be startled.

My wife is going to bear a son. Yes she's going to bear a son. And he's to be great in the sight of God.

The man couldn't believe it and because of this you remember he was smitten with dumbness. And eventually they brought him a pad and a table and he wrote and he said what his name was going to be and they said well there's no one. It was of this little child that Jesus said he should be the greatest man that was ever born of woman.

And when this woman was pregnant with this child she went to see her cousin who was pregnant and immediately she got into the presence of Jesus. I'm going to stress that, not until that. Immediately Elizabeth came with a child in her womb and got to marry with a child in her womb.

Then the child left within her womb and it says, and this is the wonder of the whole thing to me. It says that Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost. It says Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

And it says that John Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost through his mother. What an amazing thing. Everything about this is all according to a divine plan, moving in the realm of the spirit of God.

You see I discovered something. I'm convinced, you may be convinced otherwise, but I am convinced there never has been a supernatural birth either of an individual or revival without prayer. And it says here in the thirty-seventh verse of the second chapter of Luke, there was a widow of four score and four years and she departed not from the temple and she was over a hundred years of age.

She didn't depart from the temple. She stayed in the presence of God with fasting and with prayer and in the night and in the day. Think of this amazing man Simeon.

Mary and Joseph come into the temple and they present to Simeon a child. There's nothing unusual about this. This is a routine every day.

And suddenly as he vacates this child, suddenly he says, my God, here is the salvation of the nation. Do you think that wasn't a Claude Van Jerusalem that night that a deliberate couple was going to get Israel from abusing the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the High Priests and the Holy Ghost was yet born? He says here is the child. Here is the desire of all the nations.

Terminated in the womb of the Virgin Mary and all New Testament prophecy was born. That Christ was the fulfillment of the old and he was the fulfillment of the new. And then we know very little about John Baptist.

He went into the wilderness until the day of his showing forth. Oh, I'd love to have heard John Baptist preach, wouldn't you? I'd like to have seen this man when God said, John, you've been here twenty years. I told you this morning it takes God twenty years to make it.

You boys went to Bible school for six months and been preaching twenty years. No wonder you're dry. You better go back.

Go back to the wilderness. Go back. There's nothing on God's earth like silence.

Just take your Bibles, forget everything and everybody and shut up. And John came. Oh, I'd like to have seen him.

He was a strange man. He didn't wear any clerical attire like in our country all the preachers, Pentecostals, Presbyterians all wear their collars backwards way. Because most of them are going backwards way.

But anyhow, they wore clerical attire. The priest would go down the street and they would say the distinctive marks of God. But John wore no strange garments.

He was strange by the fact he wore only a little girdle around his loins. That was his strange dress. He was no gourmet.

He didn't go through the long, long menu and say, well, I don't know, my jaded appetite, there's nothing. You sure you don't have shrimp with a special? He just caught the flies as they were going past. The locusts.

Pulled the wings off and put them on a hot rock. He had locust burgers every day. And all the prophets had honey, you know, and Jesus ate honey too.

And Samson ate it. You know, it's true that wherever honey goes, no germs ever follow it. It's one of the greatest foods you can get.

And John Baptist had it. Strange in his dress, strange in his diet, strange in his doctrine. But I don't care how you measure this man.

Sometimes we think he's kind of an errand boy, just opening the door to let Jesus in. Look, you do a bit of research and you'll discover that John Baptist was a preacher and a prophet in his own right and he preached no less than 29 different points of doctrine in the slight evidence that we have in the New Testament. 29 different points of doctrine that he preached.

I say there have been a period of 400 years. That's an awful... Do you think that God Almighty might save America by giving us 400 years of total darkness? And do you think we could survive it? A lot of people want Jesus to come today because they're scared stiff of suffering, that's why. After all, the church has been getting lashed and tormented and stripped and prostituted.

There's a little man, some of you read his book, God's Smuggler. How many read his book, God's Smuggler? Wonderful, exciting book. I know that little man, he said, I gave him that title before either he put the book together.

I said, well, you're God's Smuggler. And he had been over in China. And he said when he was in Shanghai, he noticed men sitting on the side of the road.

They'd been for a haircut. And when their hair was cut, they left a cross in the middle of their heads. Cut it, the patches out, left their hair standing up in a cross there.

And then they had to sit on the sidewalk. And the young communists came past and hoisted all the flesh they could and spat on their heads. The church tonight is suffering untold agony.

You listen to the sweet little boys over the radio, they'll tell you that the Russians are going to come and burn the country. You're so thin with your fasting, and your homes are so poor and poverty stricken, and you haven't too many dimes to your name, and you're so stricken and helpless, that just out of his great mercy, the Lord's going to rapture you. ...is for the Christians in Russia and the Christians in China.

But no body in America is going to suffer because we're the most faithful. Isn't that lovely? Well, the man who tells you that is a liar. I know a preacher who was in Shanghai, and when he was there, because he had preached, pardon me, he was in Formosa, and because he had preached in Shanghai twenty years

before and found the Chinese people were in Shanghai, were in Formosa where they are now, he went in to see them, and he greeted them in his eloquent Chinese, and they ignored him.

One man looked up from his busy work and just frowned and said, you're a false prophet. A what? You're a false... a false prophet? Why, I gave you lectures on Mormonism and the other reasons. I am not a false... We remember when you were our pastor in Shanghai, and you had some maps of the world, and someone... and you told us that for a long time we were going to be washing... but you said, don't you worry about that, because just before that happened, the Lord's going to... The man said with tears streaming down his face, my wife was dragged out of my arms, and the last time I heard she'd had three children to the Russian guards.

My daughter was taken away, and my sons and my children were taken away. You told us everything... the Lord didn't spare us, we're living in anguish and suffering. Oh, we're living here now in a little bit of ease and comfort, but there's nothing that can bind us... You're a false prophet, we can't listen to you.

You better watch it, preacher, because one day you might go into concentration camp and some of your church... it's easy to stand up and say excitedly, we glory in tribulation and infirmity in necessities, and you go home and have a steak... Well, very reluctantly you did go to church, sonny. Sure did. Oh, brother, we're heading for trouble, I'll tell you.

God let these dear people, the darlings of his heart, he let them go into captivity for four hundred years... And God never speaks. Four hundred years and God never moves. Four hundred years of ritual and formality and sacrifice and all the ritualism that they went through, but somehow it was a form of godliness, and God decided to upset the apple cart, if you like.

What did he do, send a legion of angels? No, no, no, no, no. He took a little man, a baby, out of the womb of its mother, and he didn't find some secret way of coming out. If you'd walked down the desert there, you could hardly tell the man the color of his skin was... I've broken my laws.

Sure. You see, we think if we're really blessed and successful, we're going to have to wear a thirty dollar suit, and in the richest, most country, we think of the masters of... Ah, the provincial men who walked with God. They felt like God, they saw like God, they wept like God, they... They had no satisfaction in seeing the beauty of the temple, the ritual formality, all the things that they went through.

No, no, no, no. God has gone from them. My brother emphasized that this morning.

The spirit of the Lord departed from Samson and he wept not. One good Baptist preacher said to Dr. Tozer, he told me this himself, he said, Len, a Baptist preacher said something the other day that shook me, but I think he's right. He said if God withdrew the Holy Spirit, tomorrow my church would function just the same.

He wouldn't even know that he'd gone. We keep up the formality, the money is coming in, people are nice, one or two come to the... But oh, what a difference when a man gets a heart that craves for revival. When John Baptist came, he came with no lip that was buttoned.

He had nobody to please, he had no program, he had no priorities that he was trying to push ahead. I remember preaching on one occasion, a brother came up very graciously afterwards and he said, you know, Brother Ravenhill, I believe God's given you a ministry. Well, I didn't need anybody to tell me that, because if he hadn't, I wouldn't preach.

But he said if you'd only get along on a mountain somewhere and just persuade God to give you the gift of healing, I think you could have the... well, you could be one of the top ten preachers in America. Well, the Holy Ghost never told me I had to be one of the top or one of the bottom... ten bottom ones. I wouldn't care where I was.

But he said, you know, this is a great drawing card. Oh, Brother Miracle is the end. And do you know what he says of John Baptist? It is true that Jesus produced miracles.

And I've heard men say about four-fifths of his ministry. Sure it was, because he had no gospel to preach. And he was trying to persuade them by the very thing.

Because when he went into the temple in the sentence of John, a woman said to the big shots there, well, why don't you arrest him? Will the Messiah do more miracles when he comes on this land? But I want to tell you something for nothing, that after this 400 years of stillness, people were not running out to the desert saying, have mercy on my son, he's a lunatic. People were not saying, hey, do you see who I am? I used to be blind at the street corner, but now my eyes, I can see. I used to be deaf.

I used to have a crippled arm. There was no river of derelict humanity following John Baptist. No miracle? No, sir.

Never opened blind eyes? No, sir. Never unplugged deaf ears? No, sir. He never raised a dead man? No, he didn't raise a dead man, he raised a dead nation.

And he did it without the miraculous. He did it in the power of the Holy Ghost. Oh, when John came, I say he was a successor than any other.

I think John had already had his program from God and the Lord said, you'd better get busy, boy, because you're not going to be around here very long. No, sir, they'll chop your head off if you start preaching this. Boy, we do have a few men that are prepared to lose their heads for Jesus right now.

I say again, most of you men know to preach better than you do know, than you do preach, but you won't do it because you'll get kicked out of the synagogue. You'll really have to trust God and that'll be trouble, won't it? And you've been paying in the minister's pension fund. Oh, brother, wouldn't that be awful to have to sacrifice that for Jesus? You say, I'll lay everything on the earth.

I'll set my golf club to my minister's pension fund and my big TV and if anything else you can have, Lord, but don't intrude just too much on me kind of thing. Oh, I like to think of John Baptist standing there, no sponsors, nobody to agree or disagree with him. He stood there and they came to see this strange man, anointed by the Holy Ghost.

And I tell you, anointed by the Holy Ghost. You see, when you're a young guy, you want people to recognize your ministry and you have to go around begging.

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