

BIBLE PROPHECY -- DO YOU CRINGE WHEN YOU HEAR THAT PHRASE?

By Nino Boezio

Within the biblical domain, prophecy has often become the realm of kooks and fear mongers.

It has been used to control and manipulate people. It has made rational people do very irrational things. At various points in history, prophecy has motivated leaders to launch armies in order to fulfill a prediction.

Within religious circles today, prophecy is a billion dollar business. Some have sought to make their fame and fortune through writing books, conducting lectures and making religious pronouncements based on prophecy, only to later crash into embarrassment and oblivion as the prophecies don't come to pass.

It is also surprising how some can create vast literary volumes and books running several hundred pages, based on some rather narrow interpretations of a few short verses of the Bible.

It should therefore be no surprise that when many hear the word "prophecy" they quickly run into the opposite direction. In the minds of many, prophecy has been characterized as useless speculation and 'mumbo jumbo' based on obscure and unreliable verses.

According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, prophecy is defined as a prediction of something to come, or is an inspired utterance of a prophet. But is there any credible value or use for prophecy? Is it all just a fraud? How can we put prophecy into the proper context?

First of all, God is not interested in making anyone wealthy or to help them achieve acclaim through anything God has inspired to be written, prophetic or otherwise. In addition, prophecy is not a domain open to personal opinion and speculation: *2 Peter 1:20 (NKJV) knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* This verse indicates that biblical prophecies came directly from God. There is also an implicit warning given, that adding elements such as personal views and educated guesses isn't to become part of prophecy.

Prophecy is one of the tools God uses to work with people. It proves His existence and power (Isaiah 46:9-10).

However, most of those who engage in prophecy today should not be 'in that business'. They aren't qualified to understand it or apply it. They are not using it for the purposes God intended.

God discloses that there are false prophets who simply “cook up” prophetic interpretations and He warns of serious consequences to such individuals, for they lead people astray (Jeremiah 23:21-32). Implicit within the message of prophecy, is a requirement to be aligned with God’s character and way of life, as expressed elsewhere in the Bible.

We should not be turned off the subject of prophecy simply because many have misused it and given it a bad name, often motivated through selfish rather than godly reasons.

When we examine biblical prophecy, we should ensure that what is rendered makes sense in light of other scriptures within the Bible. The use of prophecy should not be manipulative. Prophecy does need to be handled with the proper care.

I would suggest one maintains an open mind when biblical prophecy could become relevant. With the right biblical understanding and through a godly attitude, prophecy provides messages which are truly powerful and explain how God operates with our world.

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