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The Message of the Prophets

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Forward

These days are a time when many people in leadership say what they think people want to hear. The Bible calls it catering to “itching ears”. (2 Timothy 4:3) It is rather frightening to see how people have rejected Godly wisdom and that the time has come “when men will not put up with sound doctrine (or principles) and, instead, to suit their own desires, have gathered around them a great number of teachers to say what they want to hear”. Paul goes on to say they will turn their ears away from the truth. This is extremely prevalent in governments and politics, yet Paul also instructs that “everyone must

submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established". (Romans 13:1) This is not just a recent problem because fallen man has such a rebellious nature, so turning away from the truth is almost inevitable. In fact it was a problem from the time Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden.

In this same letter to Timothy, Paul also warns that people will be always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. (2 Timothy 3:7) We are writing this book in the hope that we can discover, by the revelation from the heart of God, what was His original plan for His world. If the Holy Spirit knew there was a looming problem that must be written to warn future generations, He has had the apostle express this in the context of evangelism, the proclaiming of the gospel. Since there are only two spiritual kingdoms and the gospel is concerned with God's Kingdom, evangelism is very important to God, and He has definite strategies for how it is to be done. We are herein presenting God's recent revelations to us, the writers.

1. The Speaking Spirit Creates

God is Spirit and the Spirit of God hovered at the beginning while God spoke into being His creation of the world and the earth in particular. He foretold what He wanted and proclaimed it to be and it became reality. (Genesis 1:1-25)

There are three parts to prophecy. Foretell, proclaim with words and it comes to pass. All truth and all good come about this way because this is how God decreed. If any one part is missing it is not from God.

After God had created His most beautiful and perfect setting He made His great decision. He made man in His own image. (Genesis 1:27) He did not make animals in His own image, so man is a higher being than animals and they are to be ruled by man. No matter what science discovers about DNA similarities, man and woman are not meant to be animals. **God did something very special to make sure that man was different.** He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being”. (Genesis 2:7)

What then is a living being? Surely an animal is a living being, or even an amoeba or a virus? But if man is unique in creation then a living being is something more than alive and moving.

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones demonstrates what the breath of God does. After Ezekiel spoke to the bones they came to look like people, but he had to speak again according to the word of the Lord for the breath of God to enter them. Then the revived people became a vast army, useful to do the work of God. (Ezekiel 37:1-

We could then describe a "living being" as a person who is filled with the breath of God and ready for His service.

So at the beginning there were those "living beings" in the Garden, naming the animals, enjoying the beauty and learning from their Creator in the "cool of the day", during their time of fellowship with Him. God did not expect them to know everything yet because He intended to speak to them. This would be their training in how to rule the creation and to be fruitful. God had created them to be like Him, **speaking spirits**, because everything was to happen by **visual faith** – **foretell, proclaim and see the reality.**

There was one very important command to obey, spoken to Adam whom God had designated "head" of the household. When God creates something that He considers "very good" He does not expect anyone to countermand His decision. Eve was created as Adam's helper (Genesis 2:18) to honour and "agree" with his decisions. Adam should have exercised his headship and countermanded Eve's decision, explaining to her exactly what God told him so that she could have agreed. Unity commands God's blessing. (Genesis 2:24 & Psalm 133:1) This command was in the same spirit as every other creative statement. Although it was prohibitive it was still prophetic. **"Knowledge" was intended to be acquired by revelation from the heart of God, and not independently.** "...They may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge". (Colossians 2:2&3) James warns that earthly "wisdom" does not come from Heaven and is inspired by the devil. (James 3:15) Earthly-acquired knowledge encourages envy

and selfish ambition, disorder and every evil practice. This “wisdom” is rampant in our world today, and even in the church. James continues: “you adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God”. (James 4:4)

The devil caught on quickly to question God’s words. He was well practised in this and the reason he was cast out of heaven and his place as morning star, son of dawn. (Isaiah 14:12) Knowledge for its own sake opens our eyes to everything, good and bad. Interestingly the Bible says that the mature in Christ have trained themselves to distinguish between good and evil by their understanding and constant practice of the teaching about righteousness, which is basically obedience to God’s word. (Hebrews 5:14)

God is never caught out, and prophesied against the resulting disaster of Adam’s and Eve’s stupidity. Bad words must be refuted immediately by a greater authority. God said to the serpent, “He will crush your head” (your headship that you have just stolen from My man to whom I delegated My authority).

Interestingly, Jesus was forced to refute Peter’s words very strongly when Peter rebuked Jesus for talking about the way He would die. (Matthew 16:21-23)

God had undone what He could, but He had freely given His authority on the earth to Man, so only Man could take back the authority that the devil had stolen. This would have to be done in the same way that God had created – by speaking words of authority. Jesus deliberately called Himself the Son of Man, to prophesy to the devil what Man was about to do. Yet the devil missed his cue. Paul

says, “We do speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined...before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”. (1 Corinthians 2:6-8) The devil cannot know the mind of God because only the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11)

After the crucifixion and resurrection everything was accomplished and Jesus had taken back the authority of man. However this would be ongoing to the close of the age when the devil would be thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:10) Paul writes that our struggle is...against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12) We have written a book, ***"We Have an Enemy"*** which is published on our website or is available in printed copy. This explains more about the strategy of the enemy.

2. Made in God’s Image to Represent Him

We have agreed with God that man is made in God’s image. This is actually an immense privilege and responsibility. We have been given the ability to create what is not yet, with words. This principle is so important to God that when Moses refused to speak to the people on God’s behalf God told him He would help him speak and would teach him what to say. (Exodus 4:12) When Moses spoke to

Pharaoh the words came to pass every time. (Exodus 7:16-18; 8:1-5; 8:20-23; 9:1-6; 9:13-19; 10:3-6) Because God does not tolerate evil, especially against His children, He had resolved to punish those who would not honour His words. But there were many in Egypt who did take the word of the Lord, spoken by Moses, very seriously. Some had protected their slaves and livestock. (Exodus 9:20) Some were favourably disposed to give silver and gold. (Exodus 11:2) Many others left Egypt with them. (Exodus 12:38) Moses was given instructions about slaves and hired workers and about “aliens”. Every male who wanted to participate in the Passover had to be circumcised, but when they had received the sign of Covenant they were to be regarded as members of God’s people. (Exodus 12:43-49) The lives of these people who became converts into God’s family were completely changed – from being enemies of God to His precious children. God has not changed His plan. His children are to represent Him so that others will be attracted to come into His family.

Rebellion against God’s plan is understandably grieving to God. Representing Him is His number one plan and God will not be thwarted. Any child who rebels against the parent is rightfully punished because the parent knows the end from the beginning and the responsibility is to train the child in right living.

After the spies were sent to inspect the land of Canaan, the land God had promised His chosen people, only Joshua and Caleb returned with a good report of hope and faith that God had every intention of helping the people achieve what He had promised. Ten of the spies gave a bad report, full of negativity and fear, and God was very angry with them because they transmitted their lack of faith

and their fears to all the people who were waiting at Kadesh. All the people began complaining about God's lack of care for them. "We will die out here. Why is the Lord bringing us to a land where we will be killed?" God was angry and told them that He would do exactly as they had spoken. They will all die in the desert and will not go into the land chosen by God to bless them. Only Joshua and Caleb would qualify to go into the Promised Land, as they had spoken. (Numbers 14:1-38)

There is a similar story in Jeremiah (42) when he is speaking on God's behalf to the remnant of Judah who were complaining again, not having learned from their history. This time also they wanted to go to Egypt, instead of remaining in the land that God had given them. God is gracious and merciful and responds to repentance, but this principle has never changed to this present day. Many people talk themselves into being sick and what we fear often comes to pass. (Job 3:25)

Jesus warned us that by our words we will be either acquitted or condemned. (Matthew 12:37) This is in the context of the overflow of the heart, and people will have to give account for every careless word they have spoken. God had already warned that the heart is deceitful and beyond cure. (Jeremiah 17:9) He promises to give a new heart and a new spirit, removing our hearts of stone to give us a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26) This is the miracle that happens when we are born again by the Holy Spirit.

Abraham was commended because he believed God and he believed that God gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. (Romans 4:17) He believed that with God nothing

is impossible and everything that is part of God's plan is possible, because He is the Creator. Jesus confirmed this on at least two occasions. (Matthew 17:20 & Matthew 19:26)

When we have this new, soft heart from God He moves us to desire His plans and purposes so that we speak them into being on His behalf. This is one of the exciting things about being His child, His friend and His representative in this world. God does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7) He speaks into our hearts and we proclaim it aloud, just as He did with creation of the world. This is God's wonderful plan from the beginning, which He has entrusted to His family.

But this does require faith and absolute trust in God and in His word. If we are habitually careless with our words and do not want to learn God's ways He is unable to teach us to prophesy in His Name. He cannot afford to as we might create things that are totally unwanted. Already in His world He has a lot of "fires" to quench. Many so-called scientists do not believe that God has made the universe and is sustaining all things by His powerful word. (Hebrews 1:1-3) Global warming and climate change is being spoken into our world as if it were inevitable but even the church does not speak up about God's promises. A few verses later the writer warns us, "We must pay more careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away". (Hebrews 2:1) When Jesus calmed a storm the men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and waves obey Him!" (Matthew 8:27) The One who sustains the world can do such a simple thing!

This ongoing work that Jesus began is what God has entrusted to His church, His family. Jesus' first command was to love God and then to love our neighbour. This is where God's family must begin. There is a mighty creative power in God's love. Paul writes that without this love we are resounding gongs and clanging cymbals. (1 Corinthians 13:1) But this unconditional love is not possible without God's power to do it. Jesus did God's work in the anointing of God, by the Holy Spirit's power – God with Him. (Acts 10:38) Jesus was filled with the Spirit. We cannot hope to emulate Him if we are not also filled with the Spirit.

3. Worship in Spirit and Truth

Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman a mighty truth. (John 4:19-24) She had admitted that He was a prophet. She had just spoken words that gave Him “permission” to reveal a secret of what was to come very soon. Mankind would worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and truth. Yet Jesus did not explain to the woman what He meant. She already understood that when Messiah came He would explain everything. Jesus then admitted that He was indeed Messiah, God's Chosen One.

There is a great deal of prophecy about the Messiah in the Old Testament. The first is God's words to the serpent. (Genesis 3:15) He will crush the head of the devil (who was speaking through the

snake) although there will be great pain in it for Him. All the anointing of priests, people and places was done to give understanding of the sacredness, being set apart, that would tune the hearts of God's people to the Messiah, the Anointed One. God asked of them that their whole focus would be upon Him, just as His focus was on them. (Deuteronomy 32:10 and Psalm 17:8) This is echoed by Jesus when He states the commandments, the first being to love the Lord with all your heart, your soul, your strength and your mind. (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Luke 10:27)

There was an expectation of a Prophet who would speak only the words of God from the promise made to Moses. "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to Him." (Deuteronomy 18:15) "I will put My words in His mouth and He will tell everything I have commanded." (v18) Moses explains that this is because the Israelites were too fearful to hear God speak and asked for a man, a representative to speak to God and then tell them what God required.

From that time there has been a priest as mediator between God and man. But Jesus became our High Priest – a High Priest of a new covenant. (Hebrews 8) This covenant is explained. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord." This is the Lord prophesying according to our definition in chapter 1.

"I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his

brother, saying, 'know the Lord', because they will all know me, from the least to the greatest."

Apostle Peter puts it like this. "As you come to Him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him – you also, like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4&5) We who are born anew into God's family are all priests. Jesus prayed to the Father, "I have given them the glory that You gave Me...I in them and You in Me". (John 17:22) He also said to His disciples, "If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth...you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you...you will realise that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you". (John 14:15-20)

Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible to worship in Spirit and Truth. Without obedience to Jesus' teaching, even though we know about the Holy Spirit, He will not be active in our lives, but just something in our knowledge bank. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches us all things pertaining to God's mind and heart. (1 Corinthians 2:11) He will guide us into all truth. (John 16:13)

Worship can be defined as demonstrating to someone their worthship or worthiness. Love and honour are required. Jesus' only command is to love God and our neighbour. Paul wrote that our only debt is to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8) John wrote that anyone who does not love his brother is not a child of God. (1 John 3:10) He goes on to exhort

us not to just love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. (1 John 3:18) Here is this word “truth” again. John also writes that we need to recognise the Spirit of Truth, because there are many false prophets in the world. (1 John 4:1&6) One of the things that God hated was the worship of images and statues, false gods, which He called spiritual adultery. Those who do this cannot possibly know how evil proliferates because of this, because the devil has blinded their eyes and dulled their minds. The devil is a liar and the antithesis of Truth, but worship brings in the presence of the one we worship. This is what God has “built” into our psyche so He knows the danger of worshipping other than Himself. Whole nations and people groups have grave troubles because of false gods. The demons they attract proliferate and attack those who are ignorant of the devil’s strategies. In these days there are very many demonic problems, sicknesses and disasters.

Jesus knew exactly what He was saying when He asks us to worship in Spirit and Truth. He came to destroy the power of the devil (Hebrews 2:14 and 1 John 3:8) and disarm his powers and authorities. (Colossians 2:15) He expects His “priests” to continue His work to the close of the age. The more we worship Him, the more we are filled with His Spirit, the more revelation we have of the Truth, and the more His power in us will work to achieve His desires. This is what the Father looks for, and our compliance to His wishes not only brings Him pleasure but He honours our obedience and faith with His powerful Presence. We look to Him and reflect His radiance (Psalm 34:5) so that we can shine like stars in the universe as we hold out the word of life. (Philippians 2:15&16)

4. Knowing the Heart of God

When people enter into an intimate relationship, when they want to honour and bless each other, each gets to know what pleases the other person. This is exactly the same when we enter into our personal relationship with God, through Jesus and His Holy Spirit. God really loves to bless us because He really loves us. Just as we do not look for faults in the person we love, although we know they have them, God does not look at our faults when He wants to bless us. If we are not satisfied, having been convicted that we should change something in our makeup, He is only too happy to help us overcome, but He does know our weaknesses, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8) **But if we have received the gift of imputed righteousness from God, He says we are in Covenant with Him, therefore we are not sinners any more.** A sinner is someone who does not have a personal relationship with God, and is an enemy of God. Religion likes to remind us about what we were. If we believe that our transfer from the devil's kingdom to the Kingdom of God is not complete in God's eyes, we cannot live as children of God. **Belief in what God has done by His own miracle is essential for us to have confidence in who we are now, by His grace.**

The Bible is very plain about what God's plan is for every person who has accepted His offer of salvation (and some who have not yet). "He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons (and daughters) through Jesus Christ, in accordance

with His pleasure and will...In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...and He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:4-9)

For some extraordinary and even inexplicable reason, God, in love and grace, chose sinful humans to be filled with His love and power so that we could represent Him to others on this earth. It gives Him pleasure! Maybe we do not feel worthy of such an honour, but the very least we can do is to accept graciously this extraordinary gift. It is not surprising that the Apostle Paul goes on to write that he prays that we have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to comprehend such grace.

Although the new covenant extends such grace, God has not actually changed from the beginning. In our ministry we meet some people who talk about the God in the Old Testament as vengeful or wrathful, with voices full of hatred as they say these words. We can tell that they are full of thoughts that the devil has planted in their hearts. Some even proudly tell us they worship the devil.

But the free mercy of God has always been available to those who will receive it. The stories of people who had a relationship with God in the Old Testament are practical examples of God’s love and grace so that the Psalmist could write, “The Lord bestows favour (grace) and honour; no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless”. (Psalm 84:11)

It is very sad that a great deal of preaching is about the wrath of God, even in these days, but certainly in the past. **The wrath of God towards humans is assuaged by Jesus who submitted Himself**

to suffering the full effect during His Passion, the lead-up and the death on the Cross, the time in the place of the dead and even the unbelief of His followers. **Jesus really has redeemed us** – paid the price of God’s wrath so that we can have fellowship with a Holy God. This act happened 2000 years ago so preaching ever since should have been about the mercy and grace of God and the generosity and love of Jesus. God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (1Timothy 2:4) This “knowledge” is not just in the mind. This knowledge is relationship and intimacy, a reception into our inner being that Jesus **IS** the Truth. This is often done by asking Jesus into our hearts, and this pleases the Father immensely.

This longing of God for family to represent Him, people who want His power and love to flow through them to a hurting world, has always been in God’s heart. When His heart dwells in our hearts (we abide in Him and He in us) He can do everything that we will believe Him for, because nothing is impossible for Him and everything that Jesus did while He was on the earth in the flesh was done in the same power as is available to us.

The heart of God is truly good and His love endures for ever. It is a human problem to refuse to believe God who never lies, or that there is any falsehood in Him at all. Everything in the Bible that is a good promise can safely be believed and received. It is also true that every warning in the Bible that does not sound good to our ears is exactly that – a warning of what will happen if we do not heed God. The message of all the Old Testament prophets was to come to God in simple trust, not to turn away from Him, especially if things are not going right. When people turn away from God they are unable to

hear His soft voice with answers to their problems. When they turn back (repent) God always has a strategy ready, and generously helps with the solution.

5. Speaking as His Representative

“The mystery of godliness is great: God (Jesus) appeared in the flesh (a body), was vindicated by the Spirit (affirmed publicly), was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed in the world, was taken up in glory.” (1Timothy 3:16)

Jesus came in the flesh, but as the Word of God. (John 1:1) He came, primarily to save the world, to seek and to save what was lost. (Luke 19:10) We often hear this verse quoted differently – to seek and save the lost. The story of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7) confirms this statement but there is more to salvation than being “found”.

What was lost was man’s authority over the created world. Adam and Eve had given this authority to the devil. Paul explains. (Romans 5:12-17) SIN entered the world by one man, and death through sin...how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!...how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! Sin, in this context is not sins, wrong things we do, but SIN, separation from and enmity with God.

Our salvation is not just so we can go to Heaven when we leave this world. God intends that we continue the work that Jesus began, advancing His Kingdom, and setting people free

who are caught in the devil's trap. Unless we do what is in the heart of God we are failing His purposes for us as His children. The sad result is that we will never know His power in us because we are not practising it.

There are some amazing promises written to encourage us to be His prophets.

"So is My word that goes out from My mouth: it will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11)

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes...They are more precious than gold...they are sweeter than honey...in keeping them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-11)

"You have exalted above all things your Name and your Word." (Psalm 138:2)

"How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:14-17)

They must have heard! Paul quotes the Psalm (19:4). "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Just as not all the Israelites received the message, so also not all hearers down through the ages will receive. **There is hearing and there is receiving and believing.**

These facts do not deter us from proclaiming, because we do not know who are those who will receive when we speak. Paul again quotes Isaiah. "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for me." (Isaiah 65:1) We have confidence that when people respond to the Holy Spirit God will complete what He has begun. (Philippians 1:6)

Our competence to proclaim the message comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant. (2 Corinthians 3:4-6) The Old Covenant was about obedience to the Law but this could not change the attitude of the heart towards God. Like a child, one obeyed or not (and as it proved usually not!). This meant that the letter of the Law convicted of guilt as to sin but did not remove it, leaving the sinner under the penalty of death. **But entry into the New Covenant is by the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sends into our hearts when we ask!** (John 3:3 and Luke 11:13) **The Life, who is Jesus, comes to dwell in us, by faith.** (John 14:6)

Since we know what it is to respect and reverence the Lord, we seek to win people and to persuade them. Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that Jesus died for all. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him. (2 Corinthians 5:11-15) God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation. God is no longer counting men's sins against them because God is reconciling the world to Himself. He really wants His people to be in His family!

His plan is as plain as it always has been. His family, His chosen ones, are His representatives, His ambassadors. God makes His appeal through us, to speak reconciliation, because Jesus has died for all. Not only has He died for all but He has taken all the sin unto Himself so that He can impute His righteousness to us. What a message to proclaim! What a message to prophesy; that is to speak, and to see it come to pass in people's lives! It has already been foretold!

Paul writes that he would like everyone who is a Christian to prophesy. (1 Corinthians 14:5) He who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. This echoes what Moses said. (Numbers 11:29) "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them!"

6. False prophets

God told Moses, "A prophet who presumes to speak in My Name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet will die". (Deuteronomy 18:20) God regarded leading people astray by speaking other than His words was as poison. It was akin to murdering someone. Since relationship with God, before Christ, was dependent on obedience, leading people astray from God bound them to disobedience. This is very serious! God goes on to explain how they will distinguish between God's messages and another.

“If what the prophet proclaims in the Name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously.” (Deuteronomy 18:22) The people were told not to be afraid of this prophet and that God Himself would deal with him.

In spite of these words of warning Isaiah was again forced to warn Israel of the Lord’s anger at the “prophets who teach lies...those who guide this people and mislead them, leading them astray.” (Isaiah 9:15&16) Jeremiah complains on God’s behalf, “Prophets and priests alike all practise deceit”. (6:13) “Both prophet and priest are godless; even in My temple I find their wickedness.” (23:11) “Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord...I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in My council, they would have proclaimed My words to My people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.” (Jeremiah 23:21&22)

It would seem that, even under the Old Covenant, **if one wanted to proclaim a message from the Lord, as long as he was willing to consult the Lord, God would give His message to be proclaimed.** This does demonstrate that God not only wants His people to prophesy but He also relies on them. Because of God’s willingness to trust us, it is all the more devastating when people betray that trust.

It was also important to God that the message of the Messiah was proclaimed so that all would be ready for Jesus when He actually

came as Saviour. Turning the people's hearts to foreign gods and looking to mighty governments for salvation from troubles instead of to God Himself was setting precedents that were abhorrent to God's plan. Precedents are very powerful in law, so when a godless statement had been proclaimed by a leader who represented God to the people, they had a terrible choice; follow into sin or rebel and risk punishment from that leader. Daniel and his friends had to make these choices. (Daniel 3:1-18 and 6:10-18)

Each of the prophets whose words are recorded in the Bible had difficult choices to make about speaking God's word or risking punishment, mockery and persecution from evil leadership. God cared about His people so much that He always sent someone to speak His word. But this gave rise to many who wanted to countermand the prophet's words – false prophets. These were nearly always wanting to proclaim what they thought people wanted to hear.

This is very interesting if we understand that **prophecy is** as Paul defined it – **to strengthen, encourage and comfort**. But the truth is not always comfortable and sympathy does not necessarily strengthen.

Peter is very strong about false teachers and prophets. There are some traits which mark a false prophet, apart from the words. They secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Sovereign Lord. (King Jesus) (2 Peter 2:1) They are often greedy for gain and exploit people. (v3) They may despise authority. (v10) They blaspheme in matters they do not understand. (v12) They seduce the unstable. (v14) They appeal to the lustful desires of sinful human

nature, they entice people who are escaping from those who live in error, (from another bad experience, especially in the church). (v18) They promise freedom, while they themselves are slaves (of depravity) – for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. (v19)

Peter emphasises that prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21) No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation, because **only** the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God. As we have previously said (in chapter 2) God reveals His plans to His servants. (Amos 3:7) He does not reveal His plans to those in the enemy's camp. If His own are there because of carelessness or disobedience of His word they need to repent and cry out to be rescued. The Old Testament has many stories of how God's people cried out and God always came to their rescue.

The story of Balaam is interesting. (Numbers 22- 24) He was known as a prophet of God even to those outside of Covenant (the Moabites). This story is told in considerable detail because a prophet of God can change sides when he does not resist temptation. Peter describes his sin as primarily greed (2 Peter 2:14) but in Revelation (2:14) his compromise taught a pagan king how to tempt God's people to sin. Balaam sought God's advice but when it did not suit him he went again and again until he thought he had changed God's mind. But God knew Balaam's heart and tried, by having an angel in the path of the donkey, to stop Balaam, because Balaam really wanted the pagan king's reward. God did have the last word and some very important prophecy was spoken, but Balaam's attitude was condemned. The New Testament makes plain God's attitude to this

behaviour. "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the Heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance..." (Hebrews 6:4-6)

7. The Message Must be Proclaimed

The gift of prophecy will remain until even knowledge will pass away, that is when perfection comes. (1 Corinthians 13:8&9) God will continue to use this gift until everything is ready for the return of Christ. His speaking Spirit still does His work to make a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:27) This church, Christ's body, continually needs cleansing by the washing with water through the Word. **The proclaimed word must challenge the people of God to holiness and love for all men. This is the main thrust of the gospel.** Knowing the Bible is a good thing but if this knowledge does not change the lives of believers, the gospel is not really being proclaimed. God's people are to be a light to the nations. Those who are not yet in the Kingdom need to be wooed by the Holy Spirit shining forth from our holy living. "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:4) Isaiah prophesied, "Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples,

but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light". (Isaiah 61:2&3)

John came as "a voice calling in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him." (Matthew 3:1-3) He came, baptising in water and preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4) He told people to share, to be honest in financial matters and to be content with what we have. (Luke 3:11-14) These challenges spoken out by John were regarded by Jesus as forcefully advancing the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 11:12) Yet He says that he who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John. All the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. Jesus then said something rather strange. "If you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come." Almost the last words from the Prophets of the Old Testament were "I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and terrible day of the Lord comes." (Malachi 4:5) Some people must have heard the prophecy because when Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" they answered that some say He is Elijah. (Matthew 16:13) Elijah also appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The great and terrible day of the Lord must be the Cross. After this day the hearts of the fathers will turn to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. This is not "duty" relationship, but love. The basis of our relationship with God and with fellow man is love for Jesus, the Father and His Holy Spirit, which flows out to touch those whom God brings into our sphere. Jesus proclaimed on the greatest day of the feast, "Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him". (John 7:38) John explains, "By this He meant the Spirit, whom those

who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified". After Jesus made this proclamation some thought He was a prophet but some even thought He was the Christ.

Jesus was grieved with His generation because they had no hunger for God's ways and His words. (Matthew 11:16-19) They criticise as a way of deflecting any responsibility. Nothing has changed to this present day. So many people criticise the church as a way of avoiding responsibility, and would rather make up their own beliefs than believe God's word. An even greater tragedy is that Christians do not believe God's word, or do not take God at His word.

God however promises that His word will not return empty but will accomplish what He desires, and achieve the purpose for which He sent it. (Isaiah 55:11) Jesus says that wisdom will be proved right by action. (Matthew 11:19) This means that if we take God at His word, seek His heart in any matter and then proclaim it, this paves the way for God to act. Since God created us in His image, in the context of speaking the world into being, He must expect us to speak in the same way.

The very last words of the Old Testament prophecy are "I will come and strike the land with a curse". Our world is full of problems, natural disasters, wickedness and despair. If these are not a curse we do not know what else could be. God is actually relying on Christians to rebut these things by authoritative proclamation. This is the purpose of the prophetic gift, to change the curses into blessings, and this is the power given to God's children so that we can change bad situations to bring God's favour instead. We meet many people

who say to us, "Where was God when such and such thing happened?" They have no idea of the power of positive confession to speak God's will out prophetically. So much of the media forecasts doom and gloom as if it is totally inevitable.

The curse on the land is because of sin, which is doing things our way instead of God's. When the curse affects our health we rush off to the doctor as if he has the final answer. Of course they do their best but they do not actually know everything. God, however, knows the end from the beginning and always has a solution. He promises that if we lack wisdom we should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5) James also writes that if anyone is in trouble he should pray; if anyone is sick he should call the elders of the church to pray and anoint him with oil in the Name of the Lord. The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. (James 5:13-15) It is the prayer of faith that makes the sick well because God has given authority over all created things to Man. (Genesis 1:28) This authority was lost when sin came into the world, but Jesus won it back from the devil on the Cross. He expects His followers to continue His work to the end of the age. We do not need to beg God to do what He has already done through the Cross.

8. To Hear is to Obey

Jesus said, "Consider carefully what you hear...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more. Whoever has will be given more; and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away". (Mark 4:24&25) This statement is in the context of letting our light shine out and not hiding it.

Learning God's word and then not putting it into practice makes us hypocrites, not only in the eyes of the world who are watching us, but also in the eyes of God. When we try to do what we have learned, God enables us to do better but if we just put information in our knowledge "bank" it will rot and die, or smoulder and become bigotry.

Jesus emphasises this teaching in many stories. The seed that falls on good ground produces a crop. A small mustard seed grows to protect many birds. Seed when planted properly keeps growing until it produces its fruit. (Mark 4:20; 4:32; 4:28) This is also in accord with God's original plan to increase and multiply.

We have written a book on **"Ears to Hear"**, because this subject is so important. In this present book though we are emphasising being a "speaking spirit", the fact that God is actually relying on His children to speak out what He wants to happen, particularly bringing His blessing to people who do not know or have not experienced His love. Jesus' last command was to **GO** and make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19) He adds the words, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you". Do we think that these are idle words or significant words? Actually He did not command much. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength

and love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:30&31 and Luke 10:27) "By this all people will know you are My disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35) "Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him." (John 14:21) God's love is creative action. That is why Peter preached to the household of Cornelius, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him". (Acts 10:38) Jesus spoke God's word in the deliverance of the Gadarene man. (Mark 5:8) He spoke His authority to the disciples to do the work He sent them to do. (Luke 9:1-6 and 10:1-17)

The only way we can hear Jesus speak to us is if we are in a personal relationship with Him through His Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "My sheep listen to My voice, I know them, and they follow Me". (John 10:27) Certainly we can read the Bible and the written word, but Paul makes it plain that only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11) This is the only way we can understand what God has given us. Then we speak the words taught to us by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. (1 Corinthians 2:13) Paul has previously said that preaching the gospel with words of human wisdom can empty the Cross of its power. (1 Corinthians 1:17) This is an extraordinary statement. This seems to mean that if we do not preach what the Holy Spirit wants to say, the true message will not go out and people who are looking for salvation and healing will not receive it. This is so obvious in our world today. Our world is in a

mess because some preaching was "worldly wisdom", which James describes as "of the devil". (James 3:15)

Yet Paul describes the gospel as the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. This is because in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed. (Romans 1:16&17) This is not righteousness that we can earn or deserve but a gift offered to us to receive if we will. "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21) When people do not understand God's righteousness, this is how the Cross can be emptied of its power. The Bible says that anyone who is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness is still an infant. The mature have, by constant use of "solid food", trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:13&14) The Cross is the triumph of God over the enemy. He was disarmed in a public spectacle that looked like he had won because Jesus was dead. (Colossians 2:14&15)

We need to know God better. (Ephesians 1:17) We need to understand this power for we who believe. We are His body and He is the Head. This is why we, as God's children ought to listen for His voice and obey straight away. Delayed obedience is actually disobedience! It is our attitude He is looking for. He promises, "The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him". (2 Chronicles 16:9) Nothing is impossible for Him and if we are His body nothing is impossible for us either. We must step up and take Him at his word. If He created the world by His powerful word and raised Jesus through His powerful word, if He is sustaining

all things by His powerful word (Hebrews 1:3) then speaking His powerful word with confidence must bring the results that He desires.

We were reading how Jesus walked on water and Peter wanted to do this too, so Jesus told him to come. (Matthew 14:25-31) Faith enabled Peter to walk on the water but fear made him sink. Jesus rebuked his little faith and asked why he doubted. The word of God enabled Peter to do what is naturally impossible but Jesus really wanted Peter to experience a miracle. Has God changed? We believe not. He wants us to step up to do the impossible too.

Everything goes back to being able to hear God speak to us personally, but religion has to a great extent taken that away from followers of Jesus. Instead they are obliged to follow the leader, whether he/she has any faith or not (and mostly not because they like to play safe in case they fail). No one is going to risk asking for a miracle at a church meeting (if ever the opportunity arose!) if there is no one with faith to bring God's glory into that life. Yet there is a world outside the church who do not know and certainly have never met Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life. God has given us a Spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (A well balanced mind – Amplified Bible). (2 Timothy 1:7) If we, as followers of Jesus our Lord, took Him at His word God would do all the mighty things He longs to do.

9. On Earth as it is in Heaven.

The angels in Heaven must obey God instantly. What is more, they also must serve those who will inherit salvation. (Hebrews 1:14) Being in the Presence of God must be overwhelming though. Isaiah's vision was awe-inspiring (Isaiah 6:1-8) and resulted in him offering himself for God's service. Jeremiah's mouth was also touched and words were put into him to speak God's messages. (Jeremiah 1:7-9) Ezekiel had an amazing encounter of the glory of God and heard His voice. (Ezekiel 1:25-28) Daniel had an encounter with Jesus which left him helpless until he was touched and reassured. (Daniel 10:10) To the other prophets of the Old Testament the word of the Lord came (Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1; Malachi 1:1; by vision, Amos 1:1; Obadiah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Nahum 1:1) to be spoken out because they were willing to lay their lives and reputations on the line in order to obey. We have already said that prophecy will not cease until perfection comes. (1 Corinthians 13:10) If perfection is not yet then the message must still go out.

We frequently pray the Lord's Prayer. "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Do we really understand what we are praying or are we just doing a ritual thing without any faith? It is an awful thing to pray without faith because the Bible says that everything that does not come from faith is sin. (Romans 14:23) We are already writing about the power of our words, and that we will be judged by our words. (Matthew 12:36&37)

What do we mean when we pray these words? What is it like in heaven?

It is obvious that everything in Heaven is perfectly according to God's plan. If we read Revelation we can see that the worship of God and of the Son is pure and full of praise and honour. God is fully glorified and glorious. Everything that God has done from the beginning of the world is honoured and God's plans and desires are proclaimed constantly. The prayers of the saints are valued in gold bowls (Revelation 5:8) as are those who gave their lives for the gospel. The Tree of Life is there and the Books which record those who are in the family and the deeds of all people, because God values everything done in His Name.

What is usually done as worship in the average church service is to sing some songs and say some prayers and listen to preaching. How much of this is as it is done in Heaven is questionable. What we have heard is not always glorifying Jesus, full of praise and adoration of Him and all He has done to set us free from sin and condemnation, so that we can go out strengthened and shining with the Light and joy of our relationship with Him, through the Holy Spirit. We always hope that after worshipping Him we will be exploding with that fire the first disciples had on the day of Pentecost. They tumbled out into the streets and 3000 watchers, listeners, witnesses had their lives changed in a few moments.

It is the writers' custom when we come out of a church service to ask anyone we meet, as we have just been to church if we may bless them with the Holy Spirit, and the response is nearly always , "yes, thankyou!" This is what we are expecting because being in the presence of Jesus should change our countenance. Morning tea

after church is not usually a good experience for us because no one wants to talk about Jesus. We find this very strange.

In Heaven everyone loves God more than anything else. He will be our sole focus. We expect to gaze in hypnotised wonder at such glory, so glorious that we could never have imagined. Paul writes that we will see face to face. We will be perfected so there will be no sin to be burned up and our eyes will be able to look at His glorious face.

Yet already we are encouraged to look to Him and be radiant. (Psalm 34:5) (Isaiah 60:5) We are to be oaks of righteousness...for the display of His splendour. (Isaiah 61:3) (Isaiah 60:9c) David asks that God would let His face shine on him. (Psalm 31:16) After Moses had been in the presence of God his face was radiant. (Exodus 34:29-35) Paul refers to this story and declares, "Whenever anyone turns to the Lord...we, with unveiled faces reflect the Lord's glory, being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:16&18) As we understand who we are in Christ and His anointing and grow in confidence we can speak what is on God's heart to become reality on earth. Do we really want God's will on earth? Will we pay the price, and make the commitment or are we OK? Jesus was absolutely committed to doing the Father's will. (John 4:34 and 5:19) He could honestly pray that God's Kingdom come on earth because He fully committed Himself to do this. He did everything the Father asked Him to do. He testified that He had completed the work the Father asked of Him (John 17:4) even though He had not yet finished, but on the Cross He was triumphant that He really had done it all. (John 19:10) Paul followed

this example of Jesus. He could say, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of me. I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it...but one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus". (Philippians 3:12-14)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. And let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the Cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God." (Hebrews 12:1&2)

When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8)

Oh that He will find us faithful!!!