7. Now Hear This! (4Q 2026 Gift of Prophecy)

Biblical material: Num. 13:26-30; Jer. 36:20-26; 2 Chron. 36:15, 16; Matt. 23:30-35; 1 Cor. 10:6-12; 1 Corinthians 10:11.

Quotes

- One of the benefits of being a child of God is that He will warn us when we're entering dangerous territory. Just like the carbon monoxide detector warned me of possible danger in my house, God will warn us of danger in our lives. *Melanie Chitwood*
- We corrupt the Word of God when we make defective statements as doctrines. We do so when we add to the Bible the opinions of the Church or of the Church Fathers, as if they were of equal authority. We do so when we take away from the Bible for the sake of pleasing men. We do so when from a feeling of false liberality, keep back any statement which seems narrow, or harsh, or hard. We do so when we try to soften down anything that is taught about eternal punishment or the reality of hell. We do so when we bring forward doctrines in their wrong proportions. *J.C. Ryle*
- Although I never lack the presence and plain image of my own wretched infirmity, yet seeing sin so manifestly abounds in all estates, I am compelled to thunder out the threatenings of God against the obstinate rebels. *John Knox*
- God always warns before he finally punishes. *Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

Questions

Is prophecy just a means of conveying information? Why does God sometimes have to speak very forcefully? What are the implications of rejecting God's messages through his prophets? What can we learn from the experiences of others in their spiritual journeys? In what ways does God risk his reputation when appearing to speak bombastically?

Bible summary

Numbers 13:26-30 is the split report from the spies who went to check out Canaan. Jeremiah 36:20-26 records the king ordering the burning of the scroll with Jeremiah's prophecies. 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16 state that the people ridiculed the Lord's messages through his prophets. Jesus calls the religious leaders and Pharisees a brood of vipers for killing the prophets (Matthew 23:30-35). Paul states that Israel's experiences were to reveal what *not* to do (1 Corinthians 10:6-12).

Comment

In this study we look at the experience of those who reject God's word through the prophets. God's warnings can be very dramatic because they need to be to get people's attention. He is not being vindictive, but concerned about what will happen to people who refuse to listen.

Think of the way God has acted from the very beginning. He was very clear in speaking with Adam and Eve, giving them a warning of the consequences of refusing to trust him.

The invitation by the serpent to experiment, despite God's warning, seems innocent enough. He even speaks truth: you will indeed know good and evil. His real lie is against the truth of God: you will not surely die. And for those who see God punishing sin with imposed penalty, the fact that Adam and Eve do not die immediately contradicts such an assertion. The fruit was not toxic, they did not fall dead on the spot. Nor did God materialize with an executioner's sword and demand their blood. No—the penalty was intrinsic in the act, in their decision to choose the way of the Devil over that of God's, to trust the Deceiver rather than their Heavenly Father. They also knew the consequences before God arrived. They realized their state, and bought into the Devil's picture of God as a hostile and vengeful Deity. For why else would they have run and hid when they realized God was coming.

And for God, what a tragic experience! His beloved children run to hide from his presence, not wanting to be with him, in fact quivering in fear under some bush. Their actions reveal much of what has happened in this breakdown in the divine-human relationship. Similarly the curse is descriptive of what the consequences will be—for this is what happens when any being is severed from the source of life. Death is the unnatural natural consequence of sin—the denial of trust and the rejection of truth.

The banishment from the garden is also demanded by the situation rather than an act of retribution on the part of God. It is to prevent an eternity of sin that God denies access to them, (which also shows that they were not innately immortal, and should give those who believe in immortal souls pause for thought).

Similarly with God's warnings down through the ages. Rather than an autocratic tyrant, he speaks as a loving Father, concerned for his childen if they make the wrong choice. This is not "love me or I'll kill you," but "please don't make wrong choices that will inevitably bring about your death, spiritually and eventually physically. He cries out, "why will you die?" Yet by refusing to follow God's warnings we place ourselves in mortal danger, and ultimately reap the consequence. It is not God who pays the wage, but our own sin: "The wage sin pays is death, but God's free gift is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23.

Ellen White Comments

In the word of God warnings regarding this are plainly given, yet fanciful representations and interpretations of truth have been stealing in step by step, unperceived by men who ought through a clear understanding of the Scriptures, to be prepared to see the danger and sound a note of warning. {SpTB07 17-18}

The names of God's chosen servants have been handled with disrespect, and in some cases with absolute contempt, by certain persons whose duty it is to uphold them. The children have not failed to hear the disrespectful remarks of their parents in reference to the solemn reproofs and warnings of God's servants. They have understood the scornful jests and depreciatory speeches that from time to time have met their ears, and the tendency has been to bring sacred and eternal interests, in their minds, on a level with the common affairs of the world. What a work are these parents doing in making infidels of their children even in their childhood! This is the way that children are taught to be irreverent and to rebel against Heaven's reproof of sin. {CCh 177}

Jesus wept in anguish over the doomed city, but He could not deliver her. He had exhausted every resource. In rejecting the warnings of God's Spirit, Israel had rejected the only means of help. There was no other power by which they could be delivered. {DA 587}

Had the antediluvians believed the warning, and repented of their evil deeds, the Lord would have turned aside His wrath, as he afterward did from Nineveh. But by their obstinate resistance to the reproofs of conscience and the warnings of God's prophet, that generation filled up the measure of their iniquity, and became ripe for destruction. {PP 97}

God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. By rejecting the first warning from God, Pharaoh of old sowed the seeds of obstinacy, and he reaped obstinacy. God did not compel him to disbelieve. The seed of unbelief which he sowed produced a harvest of its kind. Thus his resistance continued, until he looked upon his devastated land, upon the cold, dead form of his first-born, and the first-born of all in his house and of all the families in his kingdom, until the waters of the sea closed over his horses and his chariots and his men of war. His history is a fearful illustration of the truth of the words that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7. Did men but realize this, they would be careful what seed they sow. {COL 84-5}

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