

B. Some notes on prophets and prophecy

The prophet is one who speaks for another. He may simply be a spokesman or he may be more of a plenipotentiary. His words may look to the future or may be directed to the present. He is a voice representing a power or knowledge beyond himself. In the Scripture the prophets come from all sorts of backgrounds and tribes...they cover the entire range of society and standing...but they speak for God and that is the common denominator. This, of course, is true of those prophets who are "true" as there are pretenders who may claim to speak for God or false prophets who may speak for anything or anybody. But the prophet (true) is a man called to give a message for God.

That message is sometimes about the future and this we call prediction. Sometimes it is about the prophet's present and we call this "historic advice." Some Bible teachers use the terms "foretelling" and "forthtelling" to indicate these separate functions respectively. But regardless of the technical name, the functions are there...words about the future and words about the present.

While we have no actual accounting, the impression is that much more of the literature is addressed to the immediate need...much less of it to a future setting. The latter gets the most interest and serves the interesting function of establishing the credibility of the prophet. But our contention in this study is that even the most future predictions were intended to bring about an immediate reaction of spiritual health and blessing.

What one must remember is that one did not have to predict to be a prophet...but he did need to bring messages from God. All prophecy is not prediction and in the long run all prophecy including prediction is designed to increase our spiritual service and devotion. Hence the prophets might well tell us that we need not be concerned about events in the future if we are not prepared to live in events of the now.

As noted before we do not minimize prediction.