

Beware the New Prophets

An extract from the book *Beware the New Prophets* on how influential 'prophets' in the US are evading scrutiny

Influential 'prophets' in the US are claiming to be an end-time super-army for the Lord. But their 'prophesies' are often wrong. Pentecostal pastor Bill Randles investigates . . .

One consistent characteristic of the new prophets is their insistence that the New Testament prophets do not have to be subjected to the tests of Deuteronomy (13.1-3 and 18.22).

They are incredibly resourceful in the many ways that they rationalise this position. But the end result is that there is no objective standard by which to measure them. I have assembled a sampling of their quotes on this subject so that rather than tell you what they are saying, you can see for yourself in their own words how they approach the subject of prophetic accountability.

We can begin with the US 'prophet' Rick Joyner: 'One of the greatest hazards affecting maturing prophets is the erroneous interpretation of the Old Testament exhortation that if a prophet ever predicted something which did not come to pass he was no longer to be considered a true prophet . . . The warning was that if this happened, the prophet has been presumptuous and the people were not to fear him. If one predicts something in the name of the Lord and it does not come to pass, he probably has spoken presumptuously and needs to be repented of, but that does not make him a false prophet. No one could step out in the faith required to walk in his calling if he knew that a single mistake could ruin him for life.' ('The Prophetic Ministry', Rick Joyner, Morning Star Propetic Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 2, p.2).

How is it erroneous to interpret Moses to be saying that we are to reject inaccurate prophets? If the church is to provoke Israel to jealousy (Romans 11.14), how could inaccurate prophets possibly provoke the people of Moses to jealousy? Joyner then appeals to Bob Jones' teaching on prophetic accuracy: 'Bob (Jones) was told that the general level of prophetic revelation in the church was about 65% accurate at this time. Some are only about 10% accurate. Prophecy is increasing in purity, but there is a still a long way to go. This is actually grace for the church now, because 100% accuracy in this ministry would bring a level of accountability to the church which she is too immature to bear at this time. It would result in too many Annaniases and Sapphiras' (ibid.).

Where do we begin to comment on this kind of reasoning? Prophecy itself is evolving, 'increasing in purity'!? These earnest men want to be accurate, and probably would be, but it is the church which holds it all back, for she is not quite 'there yet'. One must admit, these people are good at communication!

If the church isn't mature enough, at this time, for 100% prophecy, why didn't that stop God in the book of Acts when Ananias and Sapphira actually did die? Was Israel more mature than we are now, in the days of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel? Where are Peter's 30% prophecies or Agabus' 45% prophecies? What other prophets had been given the luxury to grow into 100% accuracy?

Another evasion is in the oft-used disclaimer that: 'We aren't saying that we are prophets, we are only saying that we have a prophetic ministry.' Mike Bickle, for example, in an interview in the book *Some said it thundered*, which is a positive account of the Kansas City Prophets, is asked the question by the author David Pytches: 'Do prophets ever get things wrong?'

'Mike Bickle was at pains to stress that he saw a real distinction between the recognised office of a prophet and those who received revelations and gave prophecies. At KCF, they only actually regard Paul Cain as a prophet . . . though the self-effacing Paul would never claim such an office for himself . . . We asked tactfully if any of them was ever wrong. They all agreed that they had occasionally been proved wrong. Sometimes their revelation was right but their interpretation or application was wrong.' (Some said it thundered, Pytches, p.108-109).

In my opinion, this amounts to a semantical evasion of the Deuteronomy tests. That somehow it's all right to stand up in the name of the Lord and speak unto God's people, fully expecting to be received as authoritative, as long as you don't call yourself a prophet. Act like a prophet, tell the church you saw Jesus Christ in a vision and a dream, pass on the unique and intriguing 'words' that this 'Jesus' gave you, but when you are proven false, duck out of accountability by denying that you are technically a prophet! It would be different if these people were merely sharing their 'insights' of Scripture, for then there would be room for debate and discussion. They may, or may not, have the correct insights. But these are not mere insights, these are interactive visions, talking angels, authoritative words, predictions etc! In many cases, we are cautioned that to reject these ministries is to endanger yourself to be another Ananias and Sapphira! These people speak out of both sides of their mouths - on the one hand, they allow themselves to be called prophets; they write books about the coming restoration of prophets; they posture themselves as prophets; but when godly people want to apply valid scriptural tests to them, they deny being a prophet!

Not all deny the title in their evasion of prophetic accountability, many just come right out and contradict Moses as being applicable to a New Testament prophet: 'The prophet who misses it occasionally in his prophecies may be ignorant, immature or presumptuous, or he may be ministering with too much zeal and too little wisdom and anointing. But this does not prove him a false prophet . . . it is certainly possible for a true prophet to be inaccurate. He would not do it knowingly, for a true prophet is so conscientious he would rather never speak at all than speak even one false word or give wrong direction to even one person. So we must understand the distinction between a false prophecy and a false prophet if we are to be open to what God says. One of the quickest ways to get into

trouble with God is to accuse one of Christ's prophets falsely. God says in his Word: 'Do my prophets no harm.' (Bill Hamon, Prophets and personal prophecy).

Note that Hamon would remove the objective test of true and false prophets, and would have us test on an entirely subjective level - the prophet's motive: 'A true prophet would not do it knowingly.' Therefore, even if there are false and misleading prophecies, we are warned not to make a judgement unless we can determine whether or not it was done knowingly. I doubt that Nostradamus was 'knowingly' a false prophet! It is impossible for us to discern the motives, it isn't within our power or our responsibility - that is why we aren't given such a test in the Old and New Testament.

The extent of this reconditioning of God's people to be more tolerant and accepting of false prophecy on the basis of motive is illustrated in an editorial article in Charisma magazine in December 1994, entitled: 'When Prophecies Prove False' by Karen Howe. The article was in response to the disillusionment that many had felt after believing the June 9 1994 prediction which John Hinkle had proclaimed on TBN, that on that date God would 'rip all evil off the face of the earth'. The author of the article held that the prediction seemed credible because it was verified by 'two men with reliable ministries'.

Howe writes: 'Those of us who were stirred by the words of these men felt a strange mixture of grief (for the poor prophets), embarrassment (at being so gullible ourselves), disappointment (that we couldn't have the announced visitation from God) and frustration (because it's so hard to tell counterfeit gifts from authentic ones). It was especially discomfiting for those of us foolish enough to share the prophecies with sceptical non-Christians . . . And I was, once more, angry with God. This would not have happened, I decided, if he had either protected his prophets from false visions or had co-operated by fulfilling their words.'

That this article should even have been taken seriously enough to be printed ought to be a wake-up call - that we in the charismatic church have been so conditioned against critical thinking that we side more with false prophets than we do with the honour of God!

There will be a tremendous price paid for our lack of loyalty to God and his Word, in fact it is already being paid by many who have submitted their lives to these new prophets. Jack Deere, in a teaching on prophetic ministry at the Toronto Airport Vineyard in November 1994, acknowledged some of the pitfalls and reservations that pastors have to opening their pulpits to 'maturing prophets': 'Who in the world would be against that ministry? They don't want it in their churches because it causes messes . . .'

It is amazing that after recounting a horror story of a blatant abuse of so-called prophecy, accusing someone of being 'into pornography' when that was totally untrue, Deere's conclusion was the tired old mantra popularised by John Wimber: 'God is in the process of offending our minds to reveal our hearts!' As in the Charisma article mentioned earlier which defended the false prophet who gave the June 9 prophecy, another travesty is perpetrated on the body of Christ and the conclusion is that God is responsible for it.

I assure you that with a mindset like this, which can justify such abuse of people in the name of 'the prophetic', we will have to see a lot more of this, probably even going beyond 'prophetic' false testimony against individuals, whole churches will be attacked this way, as long as these false prophets are allowed to continue 'maturing' their gift on real people. The damage will prove to be incalculable, in terms of shipwrecked believers, false converts, division in the Body, squandered opportunities to witness and even wrecked churches. The refusal of our leadership, especially the Pentecostals, to rise up and rebuke this unfaithfulness will be answerable before the throne of God. Instead of laughing and mourning, we should be weeping! Alas, the Scripture in Jeremiah 5 has come to pass in our day: 'The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means and my people love to have it so.'

The justifications for false and inaccurate prophecies are endless, for there is a constant need for them. One of the most creative I've seen was given by Bob Jones in an interview with Mike Bickle, on the widely distributed tape 'The Shepherd's Rod':

'(Jones) 'The Rhema will be two-thirds right on. Not quite time for Ananias and Sapphira yet.'

(Bickle) 'The Lord actually said that sentence to you?'

(Jones) 'Yeah, I mean what he was really showing me was: I'm going to release the Rhema to where that many begin to move two-thirds right on with their words, and the other third will be like poppin' a bullet at the enemy and he wouldn't fire. It was a blank. And he (God) said: I'm the one that's loading the gun, so there's going to be some blanks there . . . the blanks is pointed in the general direction of the enemy anyway, . . . If I (God) release the 100% Rhema right now, the accountability would be so awesome and you'd have so much Ananias and Sapphira going on the people couldn't grow.'

This is an amazing statement, which makes God responsible for the 'blanks' (false prophecies) and gives him a reason for deceiving us! He would actually make you feel relieved and thankful for false prophecy, using the old Ananias and Sapphira threat.

What is going to become of us Pentecostals? Whether we know it or not, Satan has desired to have us that he may sift us as wheat (Luke 22.31). We are currently being tested for our love of God, our loyalty, and that love is as God defines it. If our Lord will have mercy on us, he will sober us up, for the times definitely don't call for spiritual drunkenness. We need to have clear heads for clear, biblical thinking; it has become a matter of loyalty to God.

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