Bite Size Bible Study

Prophecy Part 3 #262 By Lee Logue

Prophetic Speech

Prophecy doesn't just predict the future; it often addresses the conditions that are current at the time of the prophecy. Biblical prophets confront kings, priests, nations, and communities when they violate God's justice, mercy, covenant faithfulness, or worship.

This type of prophetic speech shows that prophets are not merely predictors. They are covenant messengers who expose sins extant during the prophet's lifetime. These prophecies call for a change of behavior and a call for repentance and announce consequences if changes are not made.

After King David's adultery with Bathsheba and ending in the murder of her husband Uriah; Nathan, a prophet, rebukes David.

The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

"This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die." 2 Samuel 12:1-14 NIV

In another time there was a King Ahab of Israel who is confronted by the Prophet Elijah for his sins and told of the consequences that will follow.

Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth."

But Naboth replied, "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors."

So, Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors." He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.

His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?"

He answered her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

So, she wrote letters in Ahab's name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him. In those letters she wrote: "Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people.

***10** But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them bring charges that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."*

So, the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed

both God and the king." So, they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned to death."

As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead." When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. Say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!'"

Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy!" "I have found you," he answered, "because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. He says, 'I am going to bring disaster on you. I will wipe out your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have aroused my anger and have caused Israel to sin.'

"And also concerning Jezebel the Lord says: 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds will feed on those who die in the country." (There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the Lord drove out before Israel.)

When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly.

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son." 1 Kings 21 NIV

If you read the first narrative slowly you can observe that Nathan's method was to not immediately confront David, but he begins with a story, causing David to convict himself. Only then does Nathan confront him with the truth.

David was considered "the greatest king of Israel" and is the human ancestor of the Jesus. Yet even David is not beyond reproach when he fails to uphold God's moral essentials.

Imagine being in Nathan's or Elijah's shoes, tasked by God to deliver a message of conviction, judgment, and mercy to the most powerful man in the country. When confronted with sin, kings often have them killed, but these two kings saw the evil in themselves and tried to make the corrections necessary.

Reflection and Application

- What made Nathan's confrontation wise and powerful?
- How might David have responded if Nathan had skipped right to the heart of the matter?
- Why might prophecy be uncomfortable for people in power?
- How can believers speak truth with both courage and humility?
- Does the story of Ahab show that God has mercy on those who repent and make life changes?
- Did Ahab get off "Scott Free" for repenting?
- What part of God's judgment remained?
- In I Kings 21:10 (I left the number in the text above) there is a possible reference to Jesus' death on the cross. Can you find it in the Gospel accounts?
- What type of prophecy would this be labeled as?

Prophecy can be a present-tense word from God that reveals truth, exposes sin, and calls people back to faithful living.