

## The Practicability of Prophetic Preaching

BY CHARLES C. RYRIE\*

When the Apostle Paul took his leave of the beloved leaders of the church at Ephesus, he could make his boast in God that he had "not shunned to declare . . . all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Before our Lord Jesus Christ left this earth, the only specific item He noted on the curriculum of the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry to the Christian was "things to come" (John 16:13). Although it does not necessarily follow that the preaching of prophecy should have primacy in ministering the Word, it does follow that it should have an important place in the proclamation of the whole counsel of God.

Why, then, the neglect of prophetic truth? We may suggest three reasons. First, the world is disinterested because of unbelief (II Pet. 3). It is more willing to believe in the uniformity of nature than in supernatural interventions in the affairs of men such as the events connected with the Lord's return will be. Second, sin in the believer's life will prevent his being taught by the Spirit, and, since the revelation of "things to come" is His particular work, sin causes a lack of understanding of prophecy. Third, ignorance of the importance of this subject leads to its neglect, and it is for this reason that we desire to show its importance in one realm, the practical.

### 1. It Convicts

In the very first weeks of the existence of the Church, prophecy found an important place in her message, for Peter's second sermon is prophetic (Acts 3:12-26). However one may interpret the full meaning and intent of Peter's words concerning the setting up of the kingdom, it fully illustrates the point that prophetic preaching convicts. Some received the message while others so violently opposed the

\*Dr. Ryrie, a professor at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, Cal., is a graduate of the Stony Brook School, Haverford College, and Dallas Theological Seminary.

apostles that they seized them and cast them into prison (Acts 4:1-4). Paul also spoke of judgment to come in his sermon on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:31).

## 2. It Comforts

In the hour of sorrow there is scarcely a minister of the Gospel who does not turn to some aspect of prophetic truth in order to speak comfort to bereaved hearts. This is good practice, for when Paul wished to comfort the Thessalonian believers concerning their loved ones who had died in the Lord, he spoke to them concerning the rapture of the Church (I Thess. 4:13-17). His message of comfort contained the truth of the future return of Christ (vs. 16), of the future resurrection of the dead in Christ (vs. 16), and of the future reunion of believers with their Lord (vs. 17). These are the words with which we, too, are to "comfort one another."

## 3. It Corrects

Prophetic "quacks" are rampant these days, but that should make us the more anxious to become prophetic experts. Because prophecy has been misused is no reason for not proclaiming it, as some teach. No one refuses to use money just because he knows that there are counterfeits abroad; rather, one guards against the false by coming to know the marks of the true. Just so with prophecy. Paul followed such a plan when some began to teach falsely that the day of the Lord was already present (II Thess. 2:2), for he explained to the Thessalonians once again (cf. vs. 5) the truth concerning the relation of this future day to certain other future events. There are points in this chapter which some Fundamentalists call unimportant. God deliver us from such an attitude and give us an avid desire to know and to proclaim the fulness of the truth in all points.

## 4. It Consoles

A walk well-pleasing to the Lord is often a lonely one, and frequently it is a difficult one because of tribulation. At times the difficulty is physical hardship, as it often was in Paul's life, but tribulation is also mental anguish (cf.

II Cor. 2:4). Although not every Christian is called upon to endure physical persecution, every believer should know something of the mental anguish of concern for others. A knowledge of prophecy, however, makes these things easy to bear, for we know that in relation to future glory these things are light and temporary (II Cor. 4:17). Prophetic truth makes us content to be nothing now.

#### 5. It Cleanses

"And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (I John 3:3). This is probably the most obvious and oft-used benefit of the preaching of prophecy. However, the Scripture does not use the imminency of the Lord's return as a kind of club over the heads of Christians in order that the Lord might find them doing His will at the moment of His coming. There is no Scriptural premium placed upon the last moment or last day before His return. Rather, each hour of every day of our Christian lives is equally important in God's sight, and we realize that when He comes He will not simply review the last day but every day in our experience as Christians. Such a hope cleanses continuously. The word used for "cleanse" is the one commonly used in the Old Testament in connection with the Nazarite vow, and gives us a vivid picture of the completeness of cleansing in separation unto God that the knowledge of prophetic things brings. May we be doers as well as hearers of this word.

#### 6. It Creates

No one can be the same after studying prophecy. It creates not only a different attitude toward life but it creates a new atmosphere in the student's being. Who can read the fourth and fifth chapters of The Revelation without absorbing and reflecting some of the glory and heavenly air of that scene? Who could be the same as he walks the streets of earth after he has had a glimpse with the eye of faith of the street of heaven (Rev. 21:21, 22:2)? Prophetic truth does create the very atmosphere of heaven within and through our lives.

*Change*

## 7. It Constrains

Time will not always march on! Knowing what lies ahead for the world and realizing that we have the only message that can save, what else can be our reaction but to bend every effort to the winning of others to Him? Knowing that, although the unchangeable destiny of the world is condemnation, the destiny of individuals may be changed by believing the Gospel, we hasten to take the message to them. And finally, knowing that God will require an accounting from us as to the expenditure of our time, energy, and talents, we persuade men (II Cor. 5:11). Of course, this does not mean that everyone must drop everything and engage in *direct* evangelism, but it does mean that every child of God must be concerned to know and to do His will every moment of every day. We may trust Him, then, to see to it that all the daily tasks, however unglamorous, will work together to the end of bringing many sons unto glory.

---

---

## Book Reviews

By EDWIN A. BUSTARD

**Does Science Support the Scriptures?** By O. E. Sanden. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Cloth binding, 175 pages. Price, \$2.00.

Dr. Sanden has given a priceless gem to the field of Christian literature in this book. Here is the work of a Christian scholar. Many have found it easy to raise questions, but this author not only does that, but having done so, ably proceeds to answer satisfactorily his interrogations. Science is proven to be not the enemy of the Word of God but the ally of the Scriptures. Out of his own rich experiences, Dr. Sanden shows "the thrill of a new discovery," namely, that scientists, students, and soldiers were vitally interested in the correlation of science and Christianity. In one chapter, over one hundred and twenty-five questions and answers are given which were used effectively in dealing with college students. The purchaser of this book will be amply repaid by having in his possession the ninety-five articles which set forth how science supports the Scriptures. It seems that every conceivable field of knowledge is quoted in its relation to the Word of God. Pastors and Bible teachers who mean business for God, as far as reaching young people for the Lord, will be immeasurably assisted by this book; Christian students will have their faith fortified by its contents; and those who have been reached for Christ will be challenged by this presentation of the Truth.