

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Do Not Despise Prophetic Utterances**

#### **1 Thessalonians 5:20-22**

#### **Part 2**

We are coming to the home stretch of 1 Thessalonians. We are now considering **1 Thess. 5:20-22**. Let me read these verses for you out of the NAS..... **“Do not despise prophetic utterances. (21) But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; (22) abstain from every form of evil.”**

What is a prophetic utterance? A prophetic utterance is simply a communication directly from God to a person or persons through the medium of a prophet (**Ex. 4:1-6; 7:1**). The message that I gave to you last week and the message I am sharing with you this week, though I have prepared prayerfully and I believe is a message from the Lord to your lives is not a prophetic utterance. Why? Because this message did not come from God to me and then to you. This message has come from God to the apostles and prophets, then to me, and now to you. I am not a prophet but a teacher.

A prophet receives God’s message directly from God and a teacher receives God’s message indirectly from Him as he prayerfully studies the writings of the apostles and the prophets as contained in the Bible.

In the time period that this epistle was written the apostles and prophets were very active in the church. Why did they have such a prominent role within the church? The early church did not have a completed Bible as we do. In fact the Thessalonian Church most likely had no written scripture at all. The Holy Spirit obviously had given the gift of prophecy to certain members of the Thessalonian Church and would speak God’s message through them.

Paul is commanding the Church of Thessalonica not to “despise” or show contempt for these “prophetic utterances.” How might they do this? The next verse helps us to see the problem..... **“Do not despise prophetic utterances but examine everything carefully.....”** If a Thessalonian believer stood up in their assembly and represented himself as speaking for the Lord, the congregation was to examine what that individual had to say seriously before they either rejected it or embraced it. If they did not examine carefully everything that individual said before rejecting or embracing it they would be guilty of what? **DESPISING PROPHETIC UTTERANCES!**

But how were they to go about examining what had been said? The passage does not tell us. Therefore we would have to assume Paul had already communicated this information to them. But how about ourselves, how can we do this?

First of all we need to understand that the work of the apostles and the prophets was a foundational ministry. In **Eph. 2:19-20** the apostle Paul stated this very clearly, **“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household (20) having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.”** We at Valley Bible Church have chosen to believe that the Lord certainly has completed laying that foundation long ago and that there is no longer any need for prophets.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

But even though we believe this to be true there are still people who are representing themselves as prophets and these “so-called prophets” are continuing to communicate “so-called prophetic utterances.” How can we discern who is a true prophet and who is not? What are the tests the scriptures themselves set up for answering this question?

### A true prophet speaks with confidence

A true prophet must speak with confidence when he speaks in the Name of the Lord. **Deut. 18:20** tells us this very clearly, **“But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak .... that prophet shall die.”** To presume something means to “take for granted, assume, or suppose.” A true prophet of God who is speaking in the name of the Lord doesn’t think or suppose he is speaking in the name of the Lord. He knows that he is speaking in the name of the Lord. That is why they were compelled to speak as they did in such dangerous situations. They had a very clear mandate from God delivered directly to them which was expected then to be delivered to the person or persons God had intended it to be given.

Isn’t God still speaking to us today? And the answer is yes. But how is he doing this? He is doing this through the written revelation of the Word of God. Apart from this written revelation he is not speaking. And the emphasis that I am making here is on speaking. I would not want you to think that God is still not in the business of leading us. But he is doing this very indirectly not directly. He is leading me indirectly, through my personal study of His word, through the counsel of people that I respect, through the life experiences that I have passed through and the present circumstances that I am in. You might ask me why did I come to Valley Bible Church and I would say to you because I believe this is where He wanted me, this is where I felt that He would have me to go. But even as I attempted to come in this direction if you had asked me, “Do you know that this was where God wanted me?” I would have answered, “No I do not know this.” This is very much different than a prophet. A prophet what? Knew!!!

If a person represents themselves as a prophet and I ask Him how do you know that what you are sharing is truly a prophetic utterance he better have a very good answer to that question. But God is not only concerned with a prophet knowing that what he is speaking is from God but he also wants the people who are listening to the prophetic utterance to know that what the prophet is saying is from Him. If I cannot be convinced that a particular person is truly a prophet of God I will feel no obligation to accept what He says as a prophetic utterance. How can we come to the place that we can be convinced that what a so-called prophet is saying is in fact true? Let us begin to look at some tests that will help us.

### Prophecy Must be Represented as Coming from the God of the Bible

A true prophet must represent his prophesy as coming from the God of the Bible - **Deut. 18:20** ..... **“But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.”** Since there is only one true God any person who spoke for a God other than the God of the Bible would be false.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

If someone spoke in the name of Baal, a Canaanite god, that prophet would be false. Why? Because Baal did not line up with the God of the Scripture. When the Canaanites referred to their God Baal, they either were designating their local Baal, such as Ball-peor or Bal-gad - Baal-hermon, Baal-Lancaster or some other limiting factor such as “Baal-berith” which means Baal of the covenant. Or they might have been referring to the great cosmic nature-god. The Canaanites believed in many gods and many of these gods were called baal. Baal of this or baal or that. This certainly is not the way God revealed Himself to Moses which He recorded for us in the first five books of the Law and therefore any prophet who represented himself as speaking for a god that did not line up with the God of the Scriptures should be rejected as false.

So today if someone came to you and said that they had a message from Molech the god of the Ammonites what should you do? Reject him as a false prophet and reject all that he would have to say.

But how do we practically apply this to what we see in our world today? The faithful have come a long way in their understanding of exactly who God is, since the days of Moses. What do I mean? We have a much more fully developed understanding of the true nature of God since the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. **John 1:1** tells us **“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”** Who is the Word that John is referring to? He is Jesus, later in **V. 14** it says, **And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** How did apostles come to this certain knowledge that Jesus was the Son of God, God incarnate? Paul tells us in **Romans 1:1-4** **“Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, (2) which He promised before hand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, (3) concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, (4) who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead ....”** They became convinced of the deity of Christ, primarily though not exclusively, through the post-resurrection ministry of Jesus. The apostles subsequently through the work of the Holy Spirit were moved to write the New Testament which now gives us a much better understanding of God. God is a personal divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the eternal unity of God Himself, and in His work. This was the teaching of the apostles and this has been the position of the church throughout the centuries.

With this knowledge in hand this should enable us for example to deal handily with a so-called prophet such as Joseph Smith who founded the Mormon Church. What did Joseph Smith a so-called prophet of God, teach about God? He taught that God was once a man, but became God. He has a physical body, as does his wife (heavenly mother). He did not teach a trinitarian view of God. To Joseph Smith, Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three separate Gods and other gods exist also. Did Joseph Smith speak as a prophet in the name of God of the Scriptures? The answer is no and he therefore should be rejected as a false prophet and the Mormon church as a false religion.

People may go around and say that they are a prophet of God and speak in the name of that god but if they are speaking in the name of a god other than the God of the Bible that prophet should be rejected as false.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

But there is more, not only should we look at whether or not the prophet is certain of what he is saying and seek to understand why he is certain, not only should we look at the god this so-called prophet is representing to see if He is in fact the God of the Scriptures but we also need to see predictive prophetic utterances fulfilled.

### Predictive Prophetic Utterances Must Be Fulfilled

**In Deut. 18:22** it says, **“When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken .....**”

The Word translated “prophecy” literally means to “speak forth.” When a prophet would speak for God much of what he said was not predictive. But if a prophet were to make a predictive prophecy that prediction must come true.

Certainly I cannot say that the scriptures categorically tell us that every prophet will actively speak of future things. But personally I would find it very difficult to take a so-called prophet seriously who fails to provide me ample opportunity to test him in this area. This test is very important because it is a test that can separate a true prophet out from the crowd of a so-called prophet.

In **Jer. 27:2** Jeremiah is commanded by the Lord to put a literal yoke upon his neck and then to go and prophecy to the king of Ammon, to the king of Tyre, to the king of Sidon, and to the Zedekiah king of Judah that God has given all their lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. They should therefore put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon otherwise they would be punished. But this message was countered by another so-called prophet named Hananiah. In the early part of **Jer. 28** Hananiah gave the prophecy that the yoke of Babylon would be broken within two years. Look at how specific it was. He says beginning in **V. 2** **“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. (3) within two years I am going to bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. (4) I am also going to bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah who went to Babylon, declares the Lord, ‘for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.’”** And after saying this he went over to Jeremiah took off the yoke that Jeremiah had put on and broke it. This is very good, he did what any so-called prophet should do.

What was the response of Jeremiah waited? While he was waiting the Lord came to Jeremiah and told him to go to Hananiah and say, **“You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made instead of them yokes of iron. (14) For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him. And I have also given him the beasts of the field.” (15) Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah the prophet, “Listen now, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie. (16) Therefore thus says the Lord, “behold, I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This year you are going to die, because you have counseled rebellion against the Lord.” (17) So Hananiah the prophet died in the same year in the seventh month.**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

There certainly is not any doubt who the true prophet in this case was. The Lord is not in this very important area of truth going to leave us in doubt as to who the true prophets are. And it is very important that we do not neglect the clear teachings of the Word of God.

### CONCLUSION

Paul is making it very clear to us. If we are not to despise prophetic utterances we must examine everything carefully.

We must consider whether or not the so-called prophet thinks that he is speaking the very utterances of God or does he know that he is speaking the very utterances of God.

We must consider whether or not the so-called prophet is speaking in the name of the God of the Bible rather than some other God of a different kind.

And we have also seen this morning that before we can take a so-called prophet seriously they need to provide for us predictive prophetic utterances that are specific and convincing.

When God is speaking to a prophet that prophet will not think that God is speaking rather he will know that God is speaking. And the same thing is true for godly people who are listening to the Lord speak through a prophet, they will not wonder if God is speaking, they will know, if they would be careful to examine the tests that the scriptures indicate to us should be applied.