

Does 'Believe the Prophets' Apply to the New Testament Church?

For several weeks now, 2 Chronicles 20:20 has been quoted repeatedly, urging us to believe God's prophets when they say that Donald J. Trump will serve a second term while also rebuking those who question what the prophets say. It's a serious misuse of that Scripture.

I fully affirm prophetic ministry today and have been teaching on it since the 1980s. I have worked with New Testament prophets for years; I have been asked to be a mentor to some prophets and, at times, I have been used prophetically as well.

So, my issue is not with the validity of prophetic ministry today. And my issue here is not with whether these prophets heard that Trump would serve a second term, nor I am debating here whether the election was stolen. My issue is with the current misuse of "believe the prophets and you will prosper."

You see, in the Old Testament, the average Israelite could not hear the voice of God for himself or herself, since they were not indwelt by the Spirit as we are today. So, the prophets played a special role in the nation, giving them life-or-death prophetic words. That's also why prophets who prophesied falsely were held to strict standards—like stoning.

But today, we don't stone those who prophesy falsely because they are not held to the same standard. Instead, in these New Testament times, the Spirit has been poured out on all flesh and all believers, potentially, can prophesy. More importantly, all of us can hear the voice of God for ourselves. We don't need to go to a prophet for a word because the Spirit speaks to all of us. And of course, we have *the*

Word, the Bible.

In the New Testament different prophets speak, and then their words are weighed carefully by others. Everything is tested, and we hold fast to what is good. We are not simply told to “believe the prophets.” Again, that is not a New Testament concept.

It’s also important to understand that prophets do not lead the church. They are simply one aspect of the fivefold ministry, and while they may receive revelation (as one pastor who worked with some powerful prophets explained), they may not have the interpretation, and they often do not have the application. That’s why prophetic leaders are one part of a larger leadership team, from whom direction should be given to the church.

Interestingly, in the last year, there were no major prophets who brought public warnings about COVID-19. Some said the Lord showed them privately, and some may have spoken of a coming shaking, but none publicly prophesied the pandemic in advance.

In addition, some prominent prophets said that the virus would dissipate beginning mid-April, during Passover, and these words have been played on the internet over and over again to make charismatics and all believers look bad. So, if ever there was a wrong time to be preaching “believe the prophets,” it is now. As a group, they hardly have a perfect track record.

That being said, if the Lord has spoken to your heart that God wants Trump in office and if you are convinced that there is fraud, by all means, give yourselves to prayer for God’s righteous outcome. Go for it! But under no circumstances should you judge others who have not heard God say this, telling them they must believe the prophets. Hardly.

And what about Jesus-loving, Spirit-filled believers who contacted me privately before the elections to tell me they believed God showed them Biden would win? Do we tell them to

ignore the voice of the Spirit in their own lives and to believe other prophets, even though these prophets do not have a perfect track record?

Perhaps you recognize me as a teacher of the Word, but you think I'm lacking in prophetic insight. That's fine, since I write these words as a teacher of the Word and as a child of God.

In short, we must not confuse Old Testament prophetic ministry with New Testament prophetic ministry. And if you want to use an Old Testament text like 2 Chronicles 20:20 (which was spoken by the king, not the prophets) and you want to have the authority of Old Testament prophets, then you'll have to accept the Old Testament penalties for false prophecy too. Be careful what you wish for.

One last note: When you read the Bible, you see that it was often one prophet, like Jeremiah or Micaiah, who was right while the rest of the prophets, the overwhelming majority, were wrong. So, just because there's a consensus among charismatic prophets doesn't mean their words are true. Not only so, but it could be those who make us uncomfortable and challenge the crowd who are the ones speaking for God.

When it comes to the current prophetic words, I would love to see them prove true, since friends of mine have predicted that Trump would have a second term, and I personally voted for Trump. And again, if there is electoral fraud, I pray it will be exposed—and exposed quickly.

But don't let anyone tell you that you must "believe the prophets." You have your own walk with the Lord, and as one of Jesus' sheep, you can hear His voice.

Here is a recent video teaching I did on this subject. {eoa}