Church of God Ministries
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Do Not Despise Prophecies

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Often, when I read God's Word, certain statements or parts of a sentence will catch my eye, and I'll ask myself, "What does that mean?"

Join me for a few minutes and I'd like us to notice in the book of 1 Thessalonians, (taking special note of a statement in chapter 5). "*Do not despise prophecies*." (v.20) I asked myself, "How might one *despise prophecies*?"

The Greek word translated "prophecies" here is "*propheteia*" and the Online Bible Greek Lexicon makes the following comment about this word: 1a) a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events 1b) Used in the New Testament of the utterance of Old Testament prophets.

At times this word is used to refer to predictions of future events (Matthew 13:14; 1 Corinthians 13:8; Revelation 1:3), but not always. What might or could lead any of us to despise or discount and reject Bible predictions and prophecies?

I reflect back, and can think of past pronouncements by some church of God "spokesmen". Dates and scenarios and individuals were presented and dogmatically claimed to fulfill certain prophecies, but eventually were proven to simply be incorrect. Their speculations were just that, speculation, and were in error. What I think about is, because of this, how many have become disillusioned about the subject of Bible prophecy and even the Scriptures overall?

The apostle Paul warned "*Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come*." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2) Someone obviously was prematurely claiming that "Christ had already come".

It is said "that if the lie is big enough, there will be even more people who will believe it!" In

time this false assertion of “Christ already having come” became clear that it was in error. Paul went on to give some good advice, "*Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.*" (v.15) You and I need to be aware of Bible predictions and be vigilant while holding on to the trunk of the tree and not get caught up in the little twigs, no matter how interesting they might be to us.

Christ warned about being vulnerable to societal attitudes and being susceptible to deception. "*And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*" (Matthew 24:10-12)

Many will give up hope and commitment and will fail to heed the warnings. Love of God and love of one's neighbor provides both stability and a framework to work through and deal with the challenges that arise in this life. God provides discernment and understanding to those who love God and keep His commandments. "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever*." (Psalm 111:10) "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*" (Proverbs 9:10)

The prophet Jeremiah warned the people and leaders in Jerusalem and Judah time and time again, over and over. He predicted the defeat of the Jews and the destruction of the city and the Temple. But the people rejected and despised the predictions and prophecies that Jeremiah brought to them from the LORD. "*Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'Thus says the LORD, Behold, I am shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Return, everyone from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.' But they say, 'That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart*.'" (Jeremiah 18:11-12 RSV)

Friends, we must be moved to humble ourselves and be warned through the prophecies of what will take place in the future. Let us get the message and respond to it even though most around us will despise the message and suffer the consequences. Our desire and hope should be like that expressed by the Lord. "*Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?*'" (Ezekiel 33:11).

These are sobering times, yet we can remain joyful knowing what the future holds! We must also be careful to hang on the stability of the doctrinal trunk of the tree…and not let our own ideas take us astray. I encourage us to stay close to our Father in heaven through heartfelt prayer and frequent Bible study, and follow the Chief Shepherd, the leader of the church, Jesus Christ, through how we live, learn and by example to others.

Not only must we *not despise prophecies*, but we must be vigilant to watch our own spiritual condition and keep our eyes keenly focused on God…

Reflect on this with me on this Sabbath, and throughout the coming week, will you?
Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker
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