

Pillow Prophets



David Wilkerson February 1, 1985

Ezekiel stood alone against all the false prophets of Israel. These prophets would have nothing to do with the message of righteousness and impending judgment. Instead, they prophesied an era of peace, ease and prosperity.

Ezekiel 13 is the very word of Jehovah against preachers and prophets who accommodate people with flesh pleasing words they said were from the Lord. Their words were designed to make God's people comfortable in the face of impending judgment.

In fact, they were not satisfied to prophesy good times ahead from their great houses and ivory beds of ease - they sought to provide a pillow for every elbow (Ezekiel 13:18). "Woe to those who apply pillows unto all elbows..." (Original Hebrew by Spurrell) "...Behold, I am against your pillows wherewith ye entice souls..." (Ezekiel 13:20).

Ezekiel was horrified at the sight of prophets who had developed an art of making God's people comfortable. The Lord had said, "My people have set up idols in their hearts; they are brazenly setting up stumbling blocks in iniquity; they are all estranged from me because of their idols" (Ezekiel 14:1-5).

The true word of the Lord was, "Jehovah says - eat your bread with trembling, and drink thy water with grieving and fainting - and say unto the people, her land shall be emptied of its fullness, because of the violence - cities will be laid waste, the land made desolate - there shall be no more vain visions or flattering prophecies" (Ezekiel 12:17-24).

While Ezekiel went about calling the people to humility and repentance, trying to prepare God's people for the soon coming judgments, these pillow prophets went about prophesying the dreams and imaginations of their own hearts. God had not spoken to them, even though they prefaced their predictions with, "Hear the Word of the Lord." God said, "I did not send them: they do not speak for Me.

They carried with them fancy pillows to place under every elbow for all who flocked to hear their false prophecies. They placed handkerchiefs on the heads of every one of their disciples, a statement to others that meant, "Nothing but good times ahead. I see nothing ahead but peace and luxury." They walked among the poor and sick, with a lace kerchief on the head, as a sign of their confidence in the message of the prophets of self indulgence and comfort.

Ezekiel thundered the Word of God at them, as the masses congregated to hear their pleasant words.

"You see for God's people a vision of prosperity, when there is no prosperity, saith the Lord Jehovah" (Ezekiel 13:16, Spurrell).

"You follow after your own imagination - when actually you have seen nothing." (Ezekiel 13:3).

The pillow prophets are still with us! They talk about the Word of God, about prophecy, and they salt their soothing messages with a lot of Scripture. But there is a falseness in what they preach. They are not preaching the Cross or

holiness and separation. They make no demands on their followers. They seldom speak of sin and judgment. They abhor the very mention of suffering and pain. To them, the heroes of Hebrews were faithless cowards and penniless losers who were afraid to claim their rights.

Like the pillow prophets of Israel, their one supreme desire is to promote luxurious lifestyles and make people comfortable in their pursuit of the good life. They are not speaking for God. All they are doing is passing out pillows. One for every elbow of every follower. No wonder the crowds flock to sit under their message - it's painless. There is not the call of Christ to deny self and take up a cross.

What is the difference between pillow prophets and Jehovah's true prophets? The preacher or parishioner who doesn't know the difference is on dangerous ground. With so many going about gathering huge followings, it is imperative to have Holy Ghost discernment. The confused prophets must be exposed by truth. Most of them and sound like sincere, Bible loving men of God. But the Lord has given His people infallible tests to prove what is true and what is false. We are to test every man and every message - by the whole Word of God.

Let me bring to your attention three characteristics of a true prophet of God.

1. A true man of God is consumed with a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He has been so overwhelmed, so mastered by that glorious vision, he can speak of nothing else. He preaches the whole counsel of God - as it relates to Christ.

God said of the false prophets, "Woe unto the deceiving prophets who follow after their own imaginations... they have seen nothing" (Ezekiel 13:3).

Yet of Moses, it was said "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible" (Hebrew 11:27).

Jesus said of Abraham, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:5-6).

Stephen had a glorious vision of Him. "And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:5-6).

Ananias said to Paul, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth" (Acts 22:14).

To His own disciples, Jesus said, "In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see Me" (John 14:17).

The one thing every one of these men of God had in common was their life-controlling vision of Christ the Lord. Christ was the great and only cause in their life. They saw Him through the eye of faith.

Moses willingly forsook the ease and prosperity of Egypt to suffer privation in a wilderness because he had been mastered by a vision of Christ. Nothing else mattered now, not even his dream of becoming a great deliverer. He saw beyond all human ambition. He was weaned from all that was earthly because he had seen Christ. He could endure anything, for nothing on earth could compare with what his spiritual eyes beheld.

Abraham became totally detached from this world and willingly became a foreigner on earth, for his eyes were fixed on a city whose builder and maker was God. But best of all, he had seen a vision of Christ on His throne in that holy city. Never again would he settle for things temporal or earthly. His faith was built upon his continual vision of Christ. He rejoiced and was glad, for he had eyes for the invisible, the eternal, Christ!

The moment Paul saw Him everything else on earth became dung to him. The very moment Christ was revealed in him, he determined to know nothing else among men but his Lord. He gladly endured hardships, shipwreck, stoning, beatings, privations, imprisonment; none of these things moved him because he gloried in his vision of the Lord.

Any man of God who is tied to this earth or the things of earth has seen nothing. If he had a vision of Christ, if he was in constant union with Christ, he could preach of nothing else. He would stand before the crowds, proclaiming, "I count it all loss - it's all dung! It is Christ and Him alone. He is all; He fills all things. He is my very life."

Like Isaiah, the true man of God who sees the Lord, high and lifted up, will fall on his face and weep over his sins and the sins of God's people. Then he will be purged and go forth in the power of his awesome vision to preach Christ.

God warned Israel, "The prophets are like foxes..." In other words, some have no single eye focused on Christ alone, but they have eyes filled with covetousness. They spoil the vine, taking the best for themselves. They go their own way, feeding their own egos!

These self-seeking prophets claimed to have heard from God. Theirs, they claimed, was a prophetic word directly from heaven. "They say, Jehovah saith, when Jehovah hath not sent them, and they caused others to hope that their word would be verified" (Ezekiel 13:6).

The multitudes of God's people who run about to hear only soothing messages need to take a second honest look at what they are hearing and believing.

"Have ye not seen a deceiving vision and spoken a lying divination when you said Jehovah saith whereas I have not spoken" (Ezekiel 13:7)

"They have seduced my people, saying, Peace, when there was not peace" (Ezekiel 13:10).

Their message was, "God told me all is well. No trouble ahead. Good times! No trial or tribulation. God's desire is that all be happy, prosperous and at ease...." Jehovah calls that deception! I don't think ministers are taking seriously enough the tragedy of preaching the wrong message. How dare we preach peace and endless good times to a nation and a people on the brink of judgment!

Israel's sin was about to explode in unbelievable fires of divine wrath. Ezekiel did not want to preach such a disturbing message, especially to a people who had heaped to themselves pillow prophets who went about telling God's people that all was well.

Listen to what God was trying to say to His people. "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: like as the wood of the vine amongst the trees of the forest, which I have given unto the fire to devour, so have I given the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will set my face against them: from one fire shall they escape that another fire may devour them.... I have set my face against them.... I will make this land desolate, because they have trespassed a trespass, saith the Lord Jehovah" (Ezekiel 15: 6-8, Spurrell).

The people rejected the true Word of God. The masses ran off after their favorite teachers to hear the deceptive message - "God is not that kind of God. He desires only the best for us all. Great peace and good times lay ahead. Don't listen to the old prophets of doom. God told me, right from His throne room that the best is yet to come."

I ask you, what will those pillow prophets do when God begins to judge the sins of this nation and cut off its bread and its fullness? Think of the unprepared multitudes of sincere Christians who should be repenting of lukewarmness; who should be weeping because of compromise and covetousness; who should be forsaking all rather than accumulating.

Thank God the Holy Spirit is raising up a holy people who are sick of all the self-centered ministries, and their cry is, "We would see Jesus" The man-centered gospel cannot last much longer. A time of purging is ahead. We are heading into refining fires. While the covetous lounge on their beds of ease and comfort themselves with luxuries, a remnant will break away and go out seeking the Bridegroom. Christ is going to reveal Himself to the humble, the poor in spirit, and the true Word of the Lord will flow forth with unction and power. Union with Christ will become the pearl of great price.

2. The true man of God preaches and practices self denial.

Compare this with what the pillow prophets focus on! God said of them, "They pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley, and for morsels of bread... they lie to my people" (Ezekiel 13:19). A modern translation is, "These pillow prophets have money on their minds. It has made liars of them." Here is the full picture of a pillow prophet. He lets his imagination run wild. He operates on the idea that prosperity will last forever. He builds on dreams and schemes. To do it, he needs money - lots of it. His need for money becomes the focus of ministry. He ends up telling lies to God's people to get it. Then he pollutes it all by saying, "God told me"

The message of Jesus Christ is painfully blunt - deny yourself and take up your cross.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Self denial - what a foreign sounding concept in this day of self-pampering and ease. The pillow prophets have rejected it flat out. Self denial is the giving up and forsaking of all and everything that hinders the constant presence of Christ.

There is no merit in self denial. We are saved and secured by grace alone. It is not to be entered into to earn benefits from God. But self denial removes hindrances to constant communion with Christ. Paul said, "I bring my body under... and bring it under subjection: lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

We are not bringing our bodies under control; our passions and appetites are not under subjection. Sensuous television programs now whet the appetites among Christians for pornography. Lust is nearly out of control, even in the ministry. Almost daily I hear of ministers that are spending hours viewing X-rated movies and cassettes.

Multitudes of God's people, including preachers of the gospel, waste precious hours lounging before the TV idol. Like Lot, our minds are getting vexed by the things we see and hear.

Food is becoming the narcotic of believers. We don't need cocaine or alcohol - we have a legalized sedative - food. Never in all my ministry have I seen so many Christians with appetites out of control.

The deepest truth about self denial goes beyond giving up material things. You can sell your TV, shun all erotic sights and sounds, and bring all appetites under control, and still not have denied self.

What Christ is calling for is a kind of devotion to Himself that expels everything in the heart that hinders. It is a commitment to becoming absolutely nothing before God and man. It is being able to say with Paul, "I no longer live - it is Christ living in me."

The world must lose its charm to us. We must die to all self ambition - to all attachments to earthly things, until we can honestly say, "I am dead to this world and all it represents. I no longer live."

Physically alive, yes! But I must die to all that hinders my vision and love for Christ. Whatever it is - it must go. Lust? Self-made plans? Bitterness, grudges? Recognition, self esteem? I must die to it all. I must bring it all to the cross and execute self judgment.

Why is it that Christians who are about to die become so detached from the world and material and physical things? Because eternity is in view. It all pales in comparison to the joy ahead. Why can't we live like that all the time? Why not keep our minds fixed on Christ at all times?

3. A true man of God has a holy boldness against sin - he never whitewashes evil.

The pillow prophets have no foundation of holiness upon which to build. Ezekiel said, "Their foundation thereof shall be discovered." (13:14).

The pillow prophets were building walls with untempered mortar and painting the flaws over with whitewash. Worst of all, their message and manner "grieved the hearts of the righteous because of their falsehoods" (Ezekiel 13:22).

And they "strengthened the hands of the wicked." God accused them of damning souls by ignoring sin. It grieved God that compromising children of God were being encouraged rather than exposed. Lightness about sin only confirmed them in their compromising.

God will not let any minister of the gospel grieve or trouble His chosen and devoted ones without His express permission. But neither will He permit prophets of ease to call evil good and pamper backslidden Christians who need to repent.

Certainly we are called to proclaim the gospel of grace, mercy and pardon. But the man of God is also commanded to "Lift up his voice, cry aloud, and spare not - showing my people their sins."

Could it be we can't lift up a holy standard because of corruption in our own hearts? Have our own sins robbed us of holy boldness? Do we wink at the sins of others because of besetting sins in our hearts?

Do you know of a man of God who boldly thunders against sin? Does his message ring, not of legalism, but of deep personal purity? Then run to his feet - sit under his message, for he has the truth that will set you free. He is the true prophet of God, and he makes all other prophets tremble and fear. The pillow prophets despise him because he walks with truth in the inward parts.

Seek out a man of God who makes Christ real! One who makes you sit up and take notice that he has been with Jesus. One who convicts you for wasting time and for becoming earthly minded. One who will point a finger in your face, discern sin, and cry out, "Thou art the man " He is the one who truly loves you and looks out for your soul.

The pillow prophets are building their huge walls. They look very successful and blessed. But Jehovah says, "Your walls shall fall. I will bring it all down with my stormy wind. I will demolish your wall and level it to the ground" (Ezekiel 13:11-14).

God has told us that in these last days our young men shall see visions. Not of success, of prosperity or of great achievements. There will be but one vision for all - CHRIST!

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