

Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

The Test of a Prophet

I honestly don't know what people expect in terms of a prophet. They aren't always to be found where you expect to find them. One ancient prophet, for example, was a sheep herder and a fruit picker before God spoke to him, and he seems to have been a reluctant prophet, at that. On one occasion, when he had delivered an unpleasant prophecy concerning Israel, he was told to knock it off, go home, and shut up. His reply was classic:

Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, Nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheepbreeder And a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, And the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel'" (Amos 7:14-15 NKJV).

Amos wasn't born, schooled, trained, or taught to be a prophet. And I have noticed something important about God. When he decides he wants to tell you something, he does not look for someone who will impress you. He is just as likely to pick someone you wouldn't listen to. If you recall, Jesus was a carpenter and Peter was a fisherman.

So, an unlikely prophet named Amos left us with this interesting principle: "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing," Amos said, "Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:7-8 NKJV).

I identify with what he said in that last sentence. I know that I am no prophet, but if I find something God has said, how can I possibly keep quiet about it? But if God has said that he will do nothing except he reveals his secret to his servants the prophets, where are they? Surely God is not silent to the world. Or is he?

It seems to me that we are heading into some very bad times, but God seems to be disinterested, or at least detached. Oh, I realize that there are many pretenders to

the prophet's office. I have met a few myself. But they have all been just that—pretenders, to a man. I am still waiting to encounter a real prophet.

On the other hand, suppose God has already said his piece and we were not paying attention. Jesus explained the principle behind this to a group of Pharisees one day, but he did it with a parable. Mind you, a parable is a fictitious story told to drive home a point. The parable is about a certain rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. The rich man begged that Abraham would send Lazarus to warn his brothers lest they come to the same end. "They have Moses and the prophets," Abraham replied, "let them hear them."

"No, father Abraham," the rich man cried, "but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent." It sounds like a reasonable suggestion, but Abraham thought not: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be

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Find a Good Match for Your Dollars

How often have you wished you could double or triple your offerings to CEM, but haven't been able to fit it into your budget? There's good news for you that may be as close as your employer. Many companies have a corporate matching program. If you're interested in multiplying your power to give, contact your human resources or personnel department and ask if they have a matching gifts program.

CEM Memorial Day Family Retreat (Pentecost Weekend) Paris Landing, TN • May 25-28, 2007

by Skip Martin

CEM started this annual event three years ago with its first ever Memorial Day Family Retreat. The purpose of the retreat is to allow likeminded Christians the opportunity to have a “Mini-Feast of Tabernacles” each spring, with spiritual growth, fun, and fellowship for the whole family as the focus. This year’s retreat will have a slightly different format since it will be Pentecost Weekend. However, it will be a great weekend with seminars, YEA classes, two church services, a cookout or two, a pie and ice cream social, a scavenger hunt, and other fun activities, with an emphasis on activities and education for the youth.

Special YEA classes with exciting, action-packed, relevant lessons will be provided for students between the ages of three and 20. The seminars CEM has become well known for will be in session again each morning. Church services will be conducted on both the weekly Sabbath and on Sunday (Pentecost,) with special music, congregational singing, and edifying sermons. The famous CEM Pie and Ice Cream Social will again be enjoyed by all. We hope to add some singing and maybe a movie to the evening events. Planning is not complete, so any ideas and/or volunteers will certainly be welcome. Of course fellowship will be one of the main ingredients in making this another wonderful Family Retreat.

We will again be at beautiful Paris Landing State Park, located on the banks of Kentucky Lake in Tennessee (about 30 miles from Clarksville, TN). Check out the links below and whet your appetite for this exceptional holiday retreat. Affordable rooms are only \$75 per night. But it gets better. If we use at least 50 rooms, the price goes down to about \$68. Each room has two double beds, a small balcony, and a great view. There are a limited number of parlor rooms with kitchenettes adjoining the double rooms, making one or two bedroom suites. There are also a limited number of three bedroom cabins available.

The Paris Landing Inn has a fine restaurant on the first floor. They will serve a beef or turkey substitute on their buffet each morning. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served every day. Paris Landing State Park is very popular, so make your reservations as soon as possible. For reservations, call 1-800-250-8614, CEM Group Number 3078. For more information, contact Linda Benton at the CEM office 1-888-BIBLE-44 or lsbtexas@cemnetwork.com, or Skip Martin smartin400@sbcglobal.net. 2006 Family Fellowship Weekend Pictures: <http://groups.msn.com/SkipsPictures/shoebox.msnw?Page=1>.

Plans are not completed, but the following is the preliminary schedule for the 2007 Family Retreat:

Friday Night, May 25	Meet and greet with sandwiches, chips, and drinks furnished by CEM
Saturday, May 26	Seminars from 9:00-10:00 and 10:00-11:00 / YEA Classes from 10:00-11:00 / Church Services begin at 2:00 / Free Concert at Paris Landing Amphitheater 7:00 PM / Pie and Ice Cream Social begins at 7:00 PM
Sunday May 27	Seminars from 9:00-10:00 and 10:00-11:00 / YEA Classes from 10:00-11:00 / Church Services begin at 2:00 / Hamburger/Hot Dog cookout at 6:00 PM at the Pavilion / Family and Youth Activity TBA
Monday May 28	Seminars from 9:00-10:00 and 10:00-11:00 / YEA Classes from 10:00-11:00 / Farewell by Ron Dart at 11:30

More information will be posted on the CEM website www.borntowin.net as plans are updated. This is truly a wonderful time for spiritual growth, relaxation, and to make and renew friendships. Come join us on Memorial Day Weekend for a great time.

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persuaded though one rise from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

It is a shocking idea, but it is one we have to take seriously. I think what Jesus is saying is that God isn’t going to tell us the same thing over and over again. Why should he send us a prophet when we haven’t listened to the prophets he has sent already?

There are two categories of prophets in the Bible, oral and written. Elijah, the archetype of all prophets, never wrote down a word as far as we know. He spoke directly to those who were the objects of the prophecy. Someone else wrote his words, or we would know nothing of his message. Then there were the writing prophets. Why do you suppose their word was written down instead of merely delivered orally, say, as a sermon? Whatever the case, it is clear enough that Jesus concluded that the prophets wrote all this down so God wouldn’t have to tell us again and again.

Thus, if we think we would like to hear from a prophet, maybe the starting place is with those prophets who have already spoken. Now, I can already hear someone say that all those prophecies were fulfilled in the Old Testament. They aren’t for the future, are they? Apart from the fact that it leaves the world somewhat hopeless, it isn’t quite true.

I used to teach Old Testament Survey, and every year I would pass over a section in Isaiah that addresses the issue. Finally, I got the point. Here is the passage:

“Present your case,” says the

LORD. “Bring forth your strong reasons,” says the King of Jacob. “Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together” (Isaiah 41:21-23 NKJV).

This is not only useful in the study of prophecy, it is also useful in evaluating a prophet, which is what the statement is all about. I said I have encountered a few wannabe prophets in my time, every one of which I rejected. Now, how can I be so sure? One reason is that not one of them anchored his prophecy in history. A new one showed up just a few months ago. His prophecy? Something was going to happen on October 23, 2006.

How useful is that? Of course, he was right. Something did happen on October 23. I got out of bed the first thing in the morning. I shaved. But the prophecy was utterly useless. It contained no ethical or moral content, it spoke to no place in history.

If you read the Bible very much, and think about what you read, there are ideas that emerge from the prophets. One is that God does not send a prophet to tell how well we are doing. He does not send prophets with a feel-good message. If they have any encouragement to offer, it is always on the other side of disaster. God does not send a prophet with pabulum. If

you see a real prophet walking down the road to your house, you can start worrying.

Furthermore, God does not send a prophet to tell you what you should already know. Why? Because, the way he figures it, if you won’t respond to the written word, you aren’t going to do any better even if someone rises from the dead to tell you. At least that is what Jesus said. So if you are wishing that God might send a word by a prophet, you might want to rethink that idea.

There are two important ideas we need to consider. One is “prophecy,” which means to speak under divine inspiration. Prophecy always includes some moral and ethical content. The other idea is “apocalypse.” Apocalypse means “revelation,” and is merely a recounting of future events. Often in highly symbolic words and visions—as in the Book of Revelation. What most people are looking for is not prophecy. They want apocalypse. They want to predict the future, not change their lives. The Bible doesn’t work that way. A real prophet tells us *what* is going to happen *and why* it is going to happen. And it should make some kind of sense. God does not send prophets to us with the answers to trivial questions.

But I realize that I have laid down a major marker when I say that I have never encountered a true prophet. How can I be so sure? Well, for one thing, the man of God should not be gullible. We are authorized, even commanded to test the spirits that come our way. John warned that many, not

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few, “false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

John goes on to address a heresy of his own day, but this principle stands for us to read and apply. There are all manner of preachers out there, each with his own message, his own claims, and his own miracles. John seems to be saying that it is okay to think about these men—or women. To put them to the test. You don’t have to swallow what they say. The smoother they are, the more persuasive they are, the more careful you should be. After all, there were then, and now, plenty of false prophets in the world.

So how do you go about testing the prophets that may come your way? The subject is a little too big for this newsletter, but I spoke about it recently in a radio program titled, *The Test of a Prophet*. I would like to send you a *FREE* copy of that program on either CD or tape. Just check the box on the enclosed card and send it back to us. We have included an envelope for your convenience.

Thanks for listening to the *Born to Win* program, and please keep in touch.

Your servant in the Scriptures,

Ronald L. Dart

PS. The tape or CD is *FREE*, but we depend on people like you to keep the program on the air. If you can contribute, we’ll undertake to put it to good use.

An Opportunity of a Lifetime!

Teaching others about Christ and helping them to come to salvation is the Christian *mandate*. Making Bible lessons unforgettable can help little kids and young people avoid the pitfalls and consequences of sin throughout their lives. Sharing in this is one of the highest callings *you can fulfill*.

Think about it. Kids deserve to become all they can be. Young people deserve to have classes they’ll remember. . . *for life!* The young people you teach will be spared an enormous amount of pain and suffering. They will understand how to live a life of purpose and become winners. Can anything be more important to you?

Over the Memorial Day/Pentecost weekend, CEM is having another memorable Family Retreat in Paris Landing, TN designed to be a spiritual mini-feast. Children and young people are especially dear and important to those of us at CEM. Again, we are planning outstanding YEA classes for three days. And we need *your help*. Whether you’re an experienced teacher or want to make a difference, young people will benefit from your service.

YEA will have three dynamite one-hour, fun classes for five age groups (Beginners 3-5, Primaries 6-8, Juniors 9-11, Intermediates 12-15, and Senior Teen Seminars 16-20). You don’t have to write your own lessons. YEA pulls out all the stops and provides full color, easy to do, fun to use, forget-me-not lessons and supplies to go with every one. We make teaching easy and effective.

Won’t you help make a difference at this retreat? Won’t you help make a difference in the lives of our young people? This does not require experience or training. We need teachers and assistants. If you’re willing to give three hours of your time at this Family Retreat to connect kids to Christ, fill in the enclosed YEA volunteer form and return it to: Allie Dart, c/o CEM, P.O. Box 560, Whitehouse, TX 75791.



*Radio
Update*

Teays Valley, KY

WOKU 1110 AM

M-F 9:30 am,

Sat 8:00 am, Sun 12:00 pm

Ashland, KY

WOKT 1080 AM

M-F 9:30 am

Sat 8:00 am, Sun 12:00 pm

Mobile, AL

WTOF 1110 AM

M-F 9:00 am & 6:00 pm

Sat 6:00 am

Sun 6:30 am & 2:00 pm

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