

“I AM and I Am Not”

Well, as I mentioned within the children's message, in our Advent season this year we are taking time to look at the prophecies. Because it's the prophecies that tell us to repent, as well as John the Baptist, Jesus, Saint Peter and Saint Paul. That is how we prepare to see the wonderful message of Christmas and that's how we prepare to come before our Lord at all times. We are looking at the prophecies, that future concept of prophecy; prophecy fulfilled, prophecy concerning the Messiah being born of a Virgin in Bethlehem, and having to leave and go to Egypt, and wise men coming and worshiping Him. All of it prophecy. Today we continue with this prophecy. I guess you could say its part three of prophecy, but this is really big!

I'd like to take you to the epistle when Saint Paul is talking or writing to these people of Thessalonica; he is just finished talking about our Lord's return on judgment day. One of the things he tells them is and I quote, “do not quench the spirit.” Now, what is meant by that? Well, we quench the Spirit, the One who works faith in us, according to first Corinthians 12 verse 3; the One who empowers us, according to Acts 1, verse 8. We quench the spirit when we despise the prophecies. Now please remember that word prophecy literally means, proclamation, or the proclamation of God's word, the speaking out loud of God's word. And so, when we despise the speaking out of the proclamation of God's word, we are despising the law which is God's word. We are despising sound doctrine which is based in God's word. We are despising the very foundations of our faith because our faith is found in God's word. As well as we are despising the prophetic futuristic nature of some of the prophecies that have been fulfilled and we are waiting for one to still be fulfilled. We despise all of them; we do not take them into account when for instance in this day and age we say how you know the law, those doctrines, it's so old fashioned. We would like something more modern, something more acceptable to society. We despise those words of God when we deny them and say, ‘it hasn't happened.’ Such as those who claimed that God really did not create the world in six days as He said, or He really didn't flood the earth as He said. We are despising prophecy when we discount those things or when we say things like, ‘that you know, well maybe that was prophesied, but it's not going to happen. And we despise it when we try to put God into our time frame; and try to give to God our limitations. Again, when we see that Jesus says ‘behold I am coming soon;’ people will say ‘he said he was coming soon but he

hasn't come so obviously it's going to be something different he's not coming back. That is again, despising scripture. Where we read in 2nd Peter 3, verse 8 that for the Lord 1000 years is but a day, and the day is but 1000 years. Why? because God is eternal, and He is vastly superior and beyond our comprehension. So, we are not to quench the spirit by despising the prophecy, God's law, God's doctrine, the faith, the future.

What are we then supposed to do? And I want you to think about this. Paul tells us, 'but test everything and as you test everything, (in other words) the words that are spoken and told to you. As you test it you are to hold fast what is good. Hold fast to Biblical doctrine I know I've said it before I'm going to say it again; don't you dare come out of a church service or out of a Bible study and tell somebody, 'I know it's true because pastor Matt said so.' I am not an authority! Rather, I believe this because God says so. It's written in His word. So, we hold fast what is good. We hold fast to Biblical doctrine. We hold fast to Biblical law, which gives us our Biblical morality. We hold fast to the Biblical fulfillment of the prophecies. And we hold fast to the Biblical foundation of faith, and our very faith, itself. It's not that we chose Christ, Christ chose us. I didn't accept Jesus into my heart, He came, and He brought the Holy Spirit. What did I have to do with it? If there was anything, I had to do with it, it's that I quit fighting against Him. You see in all we do; we are to bring glory to God. That is again a Biblical doctrine. God gets the glory for working faith in our hearts. God gets the glory for our Salvation.

We are supposed to test everything; listen to what is said, put it to the test of sound biblical doctrine, law, fulfillment, and faith and we are to abstain from every form of evil. If it is not found in the Bible, we don't make it a part of our doctrine. If it is not found in the Bible, it is not a part of our law or morality. If it is not accepting the fulfillment of the Savior and all of the prophecies, the proclamations that God has made over time, whether it's that I'm going to deliver you out of Egypt or just going to go into Babylon, it's not a part of what we accept. We have to look at those prophecies, and we have to accept both the good and the bad. The good, He promised a Savior, beginning there in Genesis. He promised the Promised Land and deliverance. He promised Abraham when he was old, he would have son, Isaac. These were all good. But also, the bad. There is going to be flood in 100 years because the people have turned against me. Sodom and Gomorrah their cries gone out against them and you are going to be going into Babylon. We do not discount any of those.

And then Paul comes in with a prayer. Knowing these things about testing, holding fast to what is good, abstaining from that which is evil; he says, "May the Lord of peace Himself, sanctify you completely." Now again, remember sanctified means set apart. Now, how will the Lord sanctify you completely? "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." May your whole spirit. Your spirit is the very essence of who you are. And he's a good man he's an honest man. Your soul, that's that spiritual part of your body, your life, it's that internal part. When we die, this body may die, but our soul does not. It will go to be with the Lord. And then your body; that's our actual physical being. So, we are to have a spirit, soul and body that is blameless. Well, you might say, 'Paster Matt, that's impossible. Scripture tells us in Romans 3:23 all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We can't be blameless.'

But that then, is what leads us to the proclamation of the prophecy and John the Baptist. First off, he makes the point that he is the fulfillment of prophecy. He says, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness." He's saying, "I am the fulfillment of Isaiah 40, verse 3. And when these individuals who were sent by the Pharisees were questioning him about this. They naturally go to fulfillment of the prophecies. Are you the Christ? Because Christ has been prophesied. Are you Elijah? one like it like you would precede the Messiah. Are you the Prophet? Again, a Prophet would proceed the Messiah. Are you one of them? We need an answer because we were sent by the Pharisees. Ironically, don't you notice this too? Here at the beginning of John's ministry, for the Pharisees, it is not worth their time to personally go out and talk to John the Baptist. It kind of tells you something then when they are out there themselves confronting Jesus; how serious that got. But the second part and this is what we can learn from is what John then says. He tells them "I am not the Christ, I am not Elijah, I am not the Prophet." He makes it clear; he takes no credit for himself, other than to say; "I baptize with water but among you stands one you don't even know yet, even he who comes after. The one who comes after, the one who's prepared the way, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.

Who comes after? the voice of one crying in the wilderness in Isaiah 40 verse 3? The one who comes after that messenger is Yahweh. we talked about that last week when we looked at what God said that this messenger will prepare the way for You. Who is "You?" That You is Jesus. But then, how is He named after this? LORD, all capital letters in it which is Yahweh. And he, John was sent to prepare the way for Jesus, Yahweh. He makes the point, He's here, you just don't know it. And why don't you know? Because you have not been sanctified completely. You have not held fast to what is good. You have accepted poor doctrine. You have

ignored Biblical law. You have ignored Biblical fulfillment. Therefore, your foundation is utterly contemptible.

John makes the point. "I'm unworthy to even untie His sandal." Why? This is God in the flesh. And to untie the sandals the lowest job of any slave. God in the flesh. That is what takes us to Isaiah 61 or Old Testament reading today; a proclamation upon which we can build a foundation of faith. What does God revealed through the Prophet Isaiah? He has clothed me with the garments of Salvation. Again, though your sins be as scarlet, white as snow." The garment of Salvation is the garment of forgiveness, sins washed away. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. It is not that we are righteous, but Christ righteousness has been given to us. Our sin is removed. His righteousness is put there. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." This is the gospel message! This is what Isaiah is proclaiming to those who are poor in spirit, weak in heart, captives to sin. The year of the Lord's favor? Well, the year of the Lord was that year that occurred every 70 years where debt was forgiven and slavery was abolished. The debt of our sin is paid for. How? By God, through His Son, Jesus Christ. And we are no longer slaves to sin and death! Which takes us back to 1st Thessalonians 5, and why Saint Paul says, "Rejoice always!" This is yours; it is given to you by Jesus. It is why that candle is pink. Through his blood our sin is washed away. John the Baptist said, "I am not the Christ. Jesus Christ said, I AM. I am the light of the world, I am the bread of life, I am the way the truth and the life. Jesus is the great I AM who forgives and clothes us with His righteousness.

That's part of the Christian faith where we, like John the Baptist, we say, 'I am not.' I am not Christ; I am not worthy to even untie a sandal on His feet. But I am glad He is the Great, I AM who has clothed me with the white robe of forgiveness and righteousness, who has made me His child, who has entrusted this Gospel message to me. And so, I will believe it with all my spirit, soul, and body and like John the Baptist, I will live for Him. I will praise Him, and I will rejoice. He is my LORD; He is the Savior.

In Jesus Name, Amen