

Thoughts on Acts Three

We find this statement in Acts 3:24 NKJV. *"Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days."* Another statement by Paul refers to the time before Samuel, *"He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet"* (Acts 13:20 NKJV). Does this indicate that the work of a prophet was not needed during the time of the Judges? The Judges did have a measure of the Spirit that had been on the prophet and Law Giver Moses (Numbers 11:25). But these Judges were to deliver Israel from physical oppression from the nations God allowed to punish them.

At a time when God allowed the king of Mesopotamia to oppress Israel for eight years, God sent a Judge to relieve Israel's burden. The children of Israel cried out to the LORD, who then raised up a deliverer, Othniel. *"The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD delivered Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. So the land had rest for forty years"* (Judges 3:8-11 NKJV).

After Israel became comfortable living in the promised land, they demanded a change in the leadership from the judges to a king (1 Samuel 8:19-22). Under the kings, the people's and nation's sins grew in types and quantities. Soon, the people and the nation became enslaved to their sins. To deliver Israel from spiritual affliction required a different solution than judges. It required Godly people to teach respect for God's Law, repent from their sins, and return to God. These people were called prophets because they spoke the exact words God wanted His people to know.

Before God called Gideon to judge Israel, He had sent a prophet to speak to the nation. *"The LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. Also I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.' But you have not obeyed My voice'"* (Judges 6:8-10 NKJV). Much later, God began to speak to people through Samuel. *"So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the LORD"* (1 Samuel 3:19-20 NKJV). For about the next 600 years, from Samuel to Malachi, God talked to His people through the prophets, begging them to give up their sins and return to Him.

All the years of the patriarchs, Judges, and prophets looked forward to a time when God would send His final prophet as Moses foretold. *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear"* (Deuteronomy 18:15). Before his death, Jacob said Judah would rule until Shiloh, a description of the Messiah, came (Genesis 49:10). Daniel told of events that would occur before a great king would come. The Old Testament's last recorded prophet said, *"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts"* (Malachi 3:1).

Finally, when everything was ready in God's great plan, Messiah came. *"When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"* (Galatians 4:4-5). The Messiah did not just

advocate for people to learn of God, and did not just encourage people to turn from sin, but provided eternal salvation to those who believe in and follow Him. *"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:12-13).

As Peter used the healing of the lame man to teach Jesus, he insisted that it was a matter of faith, the belief in the power of Jesus Christ, that enabled the healing. *"And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all"* (Acts 3:16). Peter continued to show that the blessing to the world promised to Abraham, is God's servant, raised up and *"sent to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways"* (Acts 3:26).

Have you turned and obeyed?