

Spokesman For God

Studies in the Inspiration of the Scriptures

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It is commonplace among the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures that they saw themselves as spokesmen for God. While the claim that one has received an oracle, an insight or a revelation from God is not a proof of divine inspiration, it is a characteristic we would expect from anyone who claims to be the bearer of a message from the heavenly realm. When a person makes such a claim, whether it is Isaiah, Jeremiah, Muhammad or a modern day prophet, it is our task to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 Jn. 4:1).

In this short study my purpose is only to review a few of the claims by the prophets in the Hebrew scriptures that God had revealed his will to them. It was their understanding that "no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:21). Not all of the canonical writings are found in the form of prophetic oracle and inspiration extends beyond God speaking to the prophets, but the prophets as spokespersons for God is a very significant part of God's written revelation of his will to mankind.

Moses became a great prototype for any prophet after him as an example of how the true prophets might expect to receive God's revelation. Frequently we read statements such as, "The Lord said to Moses" (Ex. 4:21; 6:1, 10, 13, 28; 7:1, 8, 14, 19; 8:1, 5, 16, 20; 9:1, 8, 13, 22; 10:1, 12, 21; 12:1, 43; 13:1; 14:1, 15, 26; 16:4, 11, 28; 17:14; 19:9, 10; 20:22; 24:12; 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12; 32:7, 9; 33:1, 17; 34:1, 27; 40:1; Lev. 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, 8, 24; 7:22, 28; 8:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1, 33; 15:1; 16:1, 2; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:1, 16; 22:1, 17, 26; 23:1, 9, 23, 33; Num. 1:1; 9:1; 14:11, 26; 15:1, 17, 35, 37; 16:20, 23, 36, 44; 17:1, 10; 18:25; 19:1; 20:7, 12, 23; 21:8,

16, 34; 25:4, 10, 16; 26:1, 52; 27:12, 18; 28:1; 31:1, 25; 33:50; 34:1, 16; 35:1, 9; Deut. 31:14, 16; Josh. 14:6).

Earlier when Moses had made excuses to God that he was not eloquent enough to be God's spokesman before Pharaoh, God told him, "I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak" (Ex. 4:12). Moses continued to object and make excuses, so God gave him Aaron to assist him. Then God made this marvelous declaration about the position of a prophet:

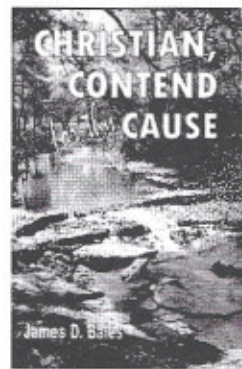
See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land (Ex. 7:1-2).

"In short, the prophet was God's spokesman" (Robert Reymond, A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith, p. 26).

The example of Moses as God's spokesman is duplicated again and again throughout the rest of the scriptures. Not only do we find the words, "This is what the Lord says" in the narratives concerning Moses, but also we find it frequently elsewhere throughout scripture: (Ex. 4:22; 7:17; 8:1, 20; 11:4; 1 Sam. 2:27; 2 Sam. 7:5; 12:11; 24:12; 1 Kings 12:24; 13:2, 21; 20:13, 14, 28, 42;

21:19; 22:11; 2 Kings 1:4, 6, 16; 2:21; 3:16, 17; 4:43; 7:1; 9:3, 12; 19:6, 32; 20:1; 22:16; 1 Chron. 17:4; 21:10; 11; 2 Chron. 11:4; 12:5; 18:10; 20:15; 34:24; Isa. 18:4; 21:6, 16; 31:4; 37:6, 33; 38:1; 43:1, 14, 16; 44:2, 6, 24; 45:1, 11, 14, 18; 48:17; 49:7, 8, 25; 50:1; 52:3; 56:1, 4; 65:8; 66:1, 12; Jer. 2:5; 4:3, 27; 6:16, 21, 22; 8:4; 9:23; 10:2, 18; 11:11, 21; 12:14; 13:9, 13; 14:10, 15; 15:2, 19; 16:3, 5; 17:5, 21; 18:11, 13; 19:1; 20:4; 21:8, 12; 22:1, 3, 6, 11, 18, 30; 23:1, 38; 26:2, 4; 27:16; 28:11, 13, 16; 29:10, 16, 31, 32; 30:5, 12, 18; 31:2, 7, 15, 16, 35, 37; 32:3, 28, 42; 33:2, 10, 17, 20, 25; 34:2, 4, 17; 36:29, 30; 37:9; 38:2, 3; 44:30; 45:4; 47:2; 48:40; 49:1, 12, 28; 51:1, 36; Ezek. 11:5; 21:3, 9; 30:6; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 3:12; 5:4; 7:17; Micah 3:5; Nahum 1:12; Zech. 1:16; 8:3).

Sometimes Moses was commanded by God to write these revelations down in a book (Ex. 17:14; 34:27), which very thing Moses did (Ex. 24:4; 34:28; Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:9, 22, 24; cf. Henry Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, p. 49). In this way we see one of the ways in which God's marvelous gift of inspiration brought to us that majestic book that we call the Bible. God spoke to the prophets and they wrote those things down in a book.



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