

THE PROPHECIES OF AGABUS

- A. There are two verses in the NT containing the prophecies of Agabus.
- 1 One of them is a summary of what he said, & the other is an actual quote.
 - 2 Today we're going to examine this New Testament prophet, & what he had to say, to see what lessons we can learn.

Ephesians 2:19-20 (FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH)

19 So then you are no longer strangers & aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, & are of God's household, 20 **having been built on the foundation of the apostles & prophets**, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ...

Ephesians 3:4-5 (NT PROPHETS! NOT ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, ETC.)

4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into **the mystery of Christ**, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as **it has now been revealed to His holy apostles & prophets in the Spirit**;

Ephesians 4:11-12 (GIFTED BY HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH APOSTLES)

11 and **He gave some as apostles, & some as prophets**, & some as evangelists, & some as pastors & teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

2 Peter 3:1-4 (PROPHETS TAUGHT WHAT APOSTLES TAUGHT)

1 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should **remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets & the commandment of the Lord & Savior spoken by your apostles**. 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 & saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

Revelation 18:20 (FALL OF BABYLON, A SYMBOL OF JER/ROME)

20 "Rejoice over her, O heaven, & **you saints & apostles & prophets**, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her."

[There are no living prophets today, all though many claim to fulfill that office. But if that were the case, then the foundation of the church would be a work in progress, which it is not; the foundation of the church was completed in the first century as God completed His revelation. So that makes what Agabus had to say, all the more important; like hearing an apostle of Christ.]

I. THE WORK OF PROPHETS

- A. Agabus was one of several prophets in Jerusalem (Read Acts 11:19-26)

Acts 11:27-28

27 Now at this **time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch**. 28 One of them named Agabus stood up & began to indicate by the Spirit ~~that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. & this took place in the reign of Claudius.~~

- B. As we've pointed out, prophets played an important role in the NT age, just as the prophets did in the Mosaic dispensation.

Amos 3:7

7 Surely the Lord God does nothing unless **He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets.**

Revelation 10:7-11 (Before the sounding of the seventh trumpet)

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, **as He preached to His servants the prophets.** 8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." 10 I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. 11 And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

1. In summary, the angel is announcing that God is about to complete His Word; He is about to finish speaking to His people through the Revelation of Jesus Christ His Son (Heb 1:1-2).
2. When the 7th angel sounded the 7th trumpet – ch. 11 – that marked a very important point in history (11:15). THE BIBLE IS COMPLETE!

3. The little book was "sweet" because it is God's word (Psa 119:103), & it provides for man's greatest need: forgiveness & fellowship.

4. The book was "bitter" because it also held a message of despair for those who refuse the gospel (2 Thess 1:7-9; Rom 2:5, 8-9).

- C. Getting back to NT prophets, just like today there were many pretenders (2 Pet 2:1).

1. That is the reason those who teach on spiritual matters must have their message tested (1 John 4:1).
2. There are no prophets like Agabus today – the gift of prophecy ceased when God's word was fully revealed in the first century.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10

8 Love never fails; **but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away;** if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part & we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 **For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.**

[Agabus, though gifted by the Holy Spirit, had only a part of what we have in fullness.]

II. THE WORK OF BENEVOLENCE

- A. Agabus' first prophecy – a widespread famine that would severely impact the brethren in Judea; the church in Antioch responded.

Acts 11:27-30

27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them named **Agabus stood up & began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world.** And this took place in the reign of Claudius. 29 **And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.** 30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas & Saul to the elders.

1. If apostolic example means anything to us, & of course it should mean everything to us, local churches are authorized to engage in the work of benevolence.
 - a. The example here limits local churches to aiding Christians only.
2. There are other examples of the same sort under different circumstances.

Romans 15:26

26 For **Macedonia & Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints** in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 8:3-4

3 For I testify that **according to their** [the churches of Macedonia] **ability, and beyond their ability,** they gave of their own accord, 4 begging us with much urging for the favor of **participation in the support of the saints,**

- a. In these passages, the aid to saints was due to the rising persecution of Christians in Jerusalem.

3. Many look to Galatians 6:10 as authority for a local church (from its collected funds) to aid non members.

Galatians 6:10

10 So then, while we have opportunity, **let us do good to all people,** & especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

- a. But the entire chapter is about the personal responsibilities of Christians within their local churches.
- b. Verse ten doesn't pertain to the collective work of a local church as we read (Acts 11:29; Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:3-4).

Why? And what difference does it make?

[For one thing, following the NT pattern of local church benevolence will eliminate a lot of potential of controversy within each congregation.]

Aiding brethren with their immediate needs is the most natural response we can have.

But if we were to extend that care to anyone with a need, then, the church could potentially be covered over with requests & demands, which could easily result in confusion, hard feelings & even division.

It's best to leave church benevolence where God placed it: collective & individual requirements.]

4. Notice also, this benevolence from Antioch was sent to the *elders* in the affected churches (Acts 11:30).
 - a. They were to oversee the needs within their particular congregations.

1 Peter 5:1-2

5 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder & witness of the sufferings of Christ, & a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 **shepherd the flock of God among you**, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; & not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

[So Agabus tells us about the work of prophets & the work of the church in the area of benevolence; what else does he teach us?]

III. THE WORK OF PREACHING

- A. Agabus' second prophecy – Paul would be arrested in Jerusalem.

Acts 21:10-14

10 As we were staying there for some days, **a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt & bound his own feet & hands, & said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt & deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"** 12 When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping & breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"

Acts 21:33

33 Then **the commander came up & took hold of him, & ordered him to be bound with two chains;** & he began asking who he was & what he had done.

1. I understand there's a controversy among some brethren over whether Paul disobey-ed God by going to Jerusalem.
 - a. But Agabus did NOT tell Paul NOT to go, but rather what would happen if he did.

b. That's like saying Christians will face persecutions more intensely in other countries than here in America.

- But does that mean we shouldn't send preachers into those countries?

c. Agabus was simply telling Paul & others that being a prisoner for the cause of Christ was in his future.

2. Paul was not alone in having to face that kind of future (1 Pet 4:12, 16), but he could rejoice in it (Matt 5:10-12).

3. The point is that the gospel must be taught even in the face of persecution (1 Tim 2:2-4), but even then it can be effective (Acts 8:4-5; 16:23-24, 29-34).

[What final lesson can we learn from Agabus?]

IV. THE WORK OF FACING DIFFICULTIES

A. Both of Agabus's prophecies had to do with preparing brethren for the trouble that was coming – 1) famine & 2) Paul's imprisonment.

1. Yet both prophecies were used for good: 1) helping brethren in need & 2) spreading the gospel.

2. In his life, Paul was more concerned with the progress of the gospel than his physical well-being (Philippians 1:12-18)

3. During difficult times, it can be easy to focus on negative things – look for things you can do in God's service despite the circumstances that exist around you.

CLOSING: "Thank you Lord, for men like Agabus!"

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