

## **Prophetic Intercession** *Jesus Talk* 5.7.20 Isa 52:13-53:12; Heb 7:11-28

Audio: <https://www.daleappleby.net/index.php/mp3-sermons/51-recent-sermons/1044-prophetic-intercession>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93N3V7VZUNM>

### **Introduction**

In the first teaching of this series I described prophets as men and women who proclaim the Plan of God in Christ which existed before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8 cf. John 17:5; Eph 1:10). In these terms, the old covenant prophets had a ministry of preparation in relation to the future coming of Messiah (1 Pet 1:10-12). Now with the advent of the Word made flesh (John 1:14), new covenant prophets share the testimony of *Jesus*. They proclaim what he has accomplished for his Church in advance of the certain consummation of the Plan, his marriage to the Bride. A Christ-centred understanding of prophecy will testify that every aspect of life and spirituality finds its origin and purpose in Jesus. As Colossians 1:16 teaches, to him. “all things were made through him and for him”, Just as I taught last week that true Spirit-filled worship was designed for Jesus (John 4:24), so intercessory prayer was made for Christ. Because in the Plan of God prayer was always to be central to the embodied life of his Son, prayer is an essential part of what it means to be human (Rom 8:29).

Prophetic intercession is rare in our day (cf. 1 Sam 3:1) because the self-centred message that has crept in to our churches (Jude 4) makes it seem that it's our story with a part for God rather than Christ's story with a part for us! When however, we have a revelation that it's all about being included in the glory of Christ everything becomes thrilling (Isa 60:5). Last week I had a dancing in the streets experience as I was seeking the Lord about what to preach, this week when I was out interceding in the dark and it was about 3degrees my heart was so touched that I found myself skipping along the path. Prophetic intercession is not well understood by many pastors, who are rarely prophets, and not well communicated by “intercessors” who are rarely teachers. Conflict has often resulted. Perhaps God in his mercy will use tonight's teaching to bridge this cultural gap. What I hope will be clear at the end of this teaching is that to engage in prophetic intercession is to be like God as he has revealed himself in Jesus. No wonder prayer is the subject of so much spiritual opposition.

### **Identification**

Whilst there are different sorts of prayer, I believe that intercession is at the heart of prophetic prayer. This is so because the essence of intercession is identification and God's identification with us is integral to the great movements in the life of Jesus. Incarnation, when “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14), is the extreme possibility of identification. In becoming human Jesus didn't take on some abstract or neutral humanity, but as Paul puts it, he came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3 cf. Phil 2:7-8) God the Son entered into the fulness of the fallen human experience. “tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sinning” (Heb 4:15). The scriptures testify about what it cost Jesus to lower himself to become one of us, for our sake. “you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became *poor*, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” (2 Cor 8:9). When we see Jesus praying, at his baptism (Luke 3:21), in the wilderness (Mark

1:35), before choosing the apostles (Luke 6:12), before walking on water (Matt 14:23), on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:29), in the environment of spiritual warfare (Luke 10:21) and so on, we see a human being conscious of his limits who knows his absolute need for the help of God. Apart from his prayerful dependence on the Father and the Spirit (e.g. Matt 12:28; John 11:41-42) he could do no miracle. It is possible to look at the prayer life of Jesus from a rather different viewpoint. One that perhaps comes out most clearly in Luke's account of the Transfiguration.

Jesus goes up the mountain to pray (Luke 9:29) and is joined by the two great Old Testament prophets, Moses (Deut 34:10) and Elijah (Mal 4:5) who "appeared in glory" and were speaking with Jesus "about his departure (exodus), which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem." (Luke 9:31). As this was happening the whole company, Moses, Elijah, Christ and the apostles were all enveloped in a cloud of glory (Luke 9:34). The key to understanding the spiritual intensity of this incident is that Jesus' exodus refers to his going back to the Father as a perfected human being through the sufferings of the cross (Heb 2:10; 5:9). The Lord was praying on the mountain for strength to go through the sufferings of the cross and enter into the glory of God for lost humanity (Luke 24:26). The cloud of glory was a prophetic sign from the Father to strengthen Jesus that the Plan would be accomplished.

The cross is God's total identification with us. The great prophecy in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 about the coming death of Christ climaxes with, "He made intercession for transgressors" (53:12). Because the height of the Lord's identification with our lostness comes through his suffering the story of the Garden of Gethsemane and the crucifixion contain the highest concentration of Jesus' prayers in the Gospels. (3x in Gethsemane, 3x on the cross Matt 26:39, 42, 44; 27:46; Luke 23:34, 46). In some of these, Jesus prays intensely praying for himself because only with the help of God can he endure the cross and triumph, on our account (Luke 22:43).

The loud cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) is a paradox of immeasurable love. When is a cry a prayer? Why does Jesus offer a petition for himself rather than an intercession for us? The answer is surely too much for us to comprehend. At the height of his intercessory existence, immersed in our sin (2 Cor 5:21) and stripped of the glory of the Father's presence, God the Son must *not be aware of his own deity*. Jesus feels excluded from the eternal saving Plan of God upon which the creation, redemption and consummation of the world depends. Only because it seems like *his* place in the Plan has been cancelled can we be reinstated in him. This sacrifice is so radical and immense that I need to express it in a rather paradoxical way. If Jesus had given in to sin in the darkness of the cross (Mark 15:33) there would have been no creation. The power of the Christ's present prophetic intercession in heaven flows from his faithfulness to be as the centre and substance of the Plan of God in severity of the trials and temptations of the cross. His identification with us which reached perfection in the cross, issuing in the resurrection, has included us fully in the life of God. The cross demonstrates that the Lord will go to any lengths to adopt us into his eternal family.

Jesus' final prayer from the cross is particularly memorable to me. A few months after my conversion I had a near drowning experience and I found myself saying in myself, over and over, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Luke 23:46). This prayer is a prayer of limitless triumph whose momentum carried the Son of God into the eternal glory of the

Father's presence (John 17:5) where, "he ever lives to make intercession" for us (Heb 7:25; cf. Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1). This testimony is indescribably remarkable. Which of the gods, ancient or modern, has ever had a heavenly life marked by prayer for his subjects? Jesus' identification with us is so total that it is continuing in the heavenlies. This is a wonderful comfort as far as our assurance of eternal salvation is concerned (John 10:27-29; 17:12); but it also challenges our lazy consciences about our failure to honour the importance of prayer. Some Christians talk a lot about the presence of God, but Jesus' ongoing prayer life in heaven tells us that to be in the presence of glory is to pray.

### **Prophetic Praying**

Prophets are men and women indwelt by the Spirit of prayer. Abraham intercedes for Sodom (Gen 18:22ff; 20:7), Moses for rebellious Israel, (Ex 32:12; Deut 9:25-29) Elijah's prayers hold back and return the rain (James 5:16-17) (would there be as much praying as there is talking about global warming!) and so on e.g. Amos (7:1ff.) Ezekiel (Eze 9:8-11; 11:13-16). Was Abraham self-motivated in his concern for the Sodomites, were any of the prophets men of such a nature as to love rebellious Israel in this way? No! we read repeatedly that the Lord will acts for his own honour and reputation (Isa 42:8; 43:7; 48:11; Ezek 20:9).

James tells us that Elijah "human being just like us/as human as we are" (James 5:17), and Peter (1 Pet 1:10-11) explains that the intercessory life of the Old Testament prophets came from the fact that "the Spirit of Christ" was "in" them. It was the indwelling presence of the coming life of Christ that made these men and women intercessors. Having seen the glory of Christ (Eph 4:13) beyond the imagining of the godliest of the old covenant saints all the people of God can be more potent pray-ers than the prophets of old.

The writer to the Hebrews possesses deep insight into the new covenant glory. After he/she catalogues the terrible afflictions of the saints of old, "Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— 38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." (11:35-38), Hebrews 11 concludes with "apart from us they should not be made perfect." (11:40). We have access to the riches of God's presence in Christ in a way previously unattainable. We have perfect access to the throne of God (Heb 4:16) unimaginable under the old covenant, we have communion with the one in whom the centre of God's plan to reglorify all things through humiliation and exaltation has been completed.

Sharing the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16) means to have a revelation that humiliation for exaltation in Christ is the God appointed plan by which all things will be gloriously recreated (Acts 3:21; Eph 1:10; Phil 3:21). The Spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10), who is the "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7), sent into our hearts witnesses with our spirits (Rom 8:16) that to identify with Jesus involves interceding for the world (1 Tim 2:1). In union with the intercessions of Christ, our prayers will embrace a longing, groaning and weeping that expresses his own perfected humanity (Luke 11:41; John 11:35; Heb 5:7). This partnership brings in the kingdom of God on earth as surely as Jesus' own intercessory life accomplished the will of the Father. Or so it should be.

I received an email from a devout friend during the week who is regularly overseas on mission. "It is this type of prayer (i.e. the Prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane) - a desperation for

the lost - that the Lord is showing me is lacking today. We are far from God's heart and so focus on such mundane trivial things compared to the eternal. It's almost like we don't want to consider judgment or get "too intense", so nothing deeply affects us anymore and *our prayer meetings are deserted.*"

I think by "our prayer meetings are deserted" he meant very few people are attending our times of prayer, but when I first read it I read it as saying that *our prayer meetings are "deserted" by the Lord.* This is actually the reason why they are deserted by people. I experience the Lord's presence and flow most strongly in an atmosphere of prophetic praying in a weekly prayer gathering. The attendees are long term mature Christians with good Bible knowledge, strong prayer lives and extensive ministries here and abroad. But I think the key to the Lord's revelatory presence is that they are seekers after the kingdom of God who anticipate that God will speak to them and call them new things to which they can submit. Submit, that is, to their part in the Plan.

### **Prayer and the Plan**

The Church as a whole is fundamentally prayerless because it lacks insight into the reality that creates the prophetic consciousness in the first place. Like the heavenly host the prophets are Plan-intoxicated people. They direct the Church to gain insight into the power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, glory and blessing of God in Christ (Rev 5:12) that it might be communicated to lost men and women across the earth. Prophets understand that the greater the revelation of the goodness and wisdom of God's Plan the more the Christian heart is moved to pray and pray and pray. Prophets know that they and all the people of God are not only agents of the eternal plan but an *indispensable part of that plan.* This is the prophetic testimony we all carry since the coming of Jesus (Acts 2:17ff; 1 Cor 14:5 cf. Num 11:29).

No one will be surprised if I say that the coming of Jesus would have been incomprehensible to first century Israelites without the prophetic witness. Today however we see across the churches an incomprehensibility about discipleship and gross ignorance about what the Spirit is saying (Rev 2:7 etc.) Our prayerlessness is a fruit of failing to accept the call upon us *all* to live a prophetic form of life shaped like Jesus in his humiliation and exaltation. Teacher and revivalist Andrew Murray said, "it is the life which prays". As Jesus offered up the fulness of his life on the cross in identification with the lost and was carried by the Spirit into the glory of the Father, so it must be with us.

### **Conclusion**

As I was out praying early Friday I was moved by the Spirit to contend for the glory of God. Then it was like I could hear massed very loud praying coming from across the city reaching the ears of the Lord of hosts (cf. James 5:4). I believe this was the pained cries of the Bride of Christ in Perth (cf. Ex 2:23-25). I sensed these cries were very close to reaching a tipping point when God would act to reveal his glory. If this is so, are we willing to take up the challenge of identifying with Jesus in his identification with a fallen creation and cry out with him for the salvation of a multitude. Are willing to heed the call of the Lord to live out the Plan as the prophetic people of God. To pray like this is to become more like God, to pray like this is to feel fully alive, to pray like this is to be one in the heavenlies with Jesus' own intercessory life. *Nothing could be more wonderful.*

