

Psalm 40: Accurately Handling Prophecy 07-07-19 PM

PART 1 - David's Story

The Psalm begins with David in trouble. He is in "horrible pit" of despair. What a great image of depression or sorrow? But then God reached in and brought David out of it. God set David on the rock, and David was given a song.

In this event David acknowledges God's mercy. This mercy came not because of sacrifices. David reflects that it was because of his heart, and the indwelling of the Word in his heart. Here is an important point for us: our sacrifices reflect our heart. If we have a bad heart then we have worthless sacrifices.

David's proper response is to become a preacher of the Gospel, or at least his good news. He will proclaim this news in the great assembly. But David also knows sin has not left him entirely. When sin and the consequences return he is confident he can plead for more mercy.

PART 2 - Considering Prophecy

AS with many Psalms, David's words were prophetic. Indeed, we are told in Hebrews 10:5-10 that they were Jesus' words: *Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me" (Hebrews 10:5).* The Hebrew writer goes on to say that *"He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second" (Hebrews 10:9).*

There is something important here about the nature of prophecy. None of us could see what the Hebrew writer revealed. It was not a natural progression to see that what David was speaking about was the dissolution of the Old Testament and its replacement by the New Testament. There is an important point here: Prophecy is NOT interpreted easily. Consider the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:30-35. No doubt a smart man, he could not fathom the prophecy of Isaiah 53.

Prophecy is not interpreted easily. It requires an inspired interpreter, or what could be called a "gift" of interpretation (I Corinthians 13:2, 14:6). We are not permitted to come up with our own interpretation of prophecy (*no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit* 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Unfortunately, this has not stopped many from wandering into prophecy and finding their own interpretations of prophecy. Worse, they have misled others in this sense. Consider some of the false understandings of Matthew 24 or false understandings of Revelation. Both of those prophetic messages have at their beginnings the interpretative notes (i.e. Matthew 24 and the destruction of the temple, and Revelation 1:1 and the timetable of the text). In this sense all New Testament prophecies (of which there are only 3-4: the destruction of Jerusalem; the great apostasy; possibly the destruction of Romans rule, and the final return of Jesus) are self-explanatory. As for Old Testament prophecies, we are told repeatedly in the New Testament that they have all been fulfilled (Luke 18:31, 24:44, etc.).

When we view prophecy today we need Scriptures to interpret them. We need to be careful understanding them, since there is no private or personal interpretation available. We need to remember the words of Paul: *"Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other" (1 Corinthians 4:6).*