

5. The truth about the fake

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A man who stood close to President Barack Obama and other heads of state while providing sign language interpretation at Nelson Mandela's memorial service on Tuesday was a "fake" who was making up his own gestures, sign language experts say, raising questions about the security at the event.

"He was moving his hands around, but there was no meaning in what he used his hands for," Bruno Druchen, the Deaf Federation of South Africa's national director, told The Associated Press Wednesday.

The country's deaf community and the ruling African National Congress have no knowledge of who the man actually is, despite him appearing on television alongside South African President Jacob Zuma last year, Reuters reported. This morning news report said that this sign language interpreter claims that he was suffering a psychotic episode during the memorial service and he's been known to become violent.

All the presidents and prime ministers and their security personnel didn't even notice that this man was a fake until the people who knew about sign language pointed it out. Finally the truth about the fake came out.

Today the airwaves is filled with a lot of fakes – the voices of politicians who promise everything their voters want to hear, but have no intention to deliver what they promise; the voices of salespeople who throw any sales pitch to make their commission even if they lie through their teeth. In my opinion the worst of all the fakes is preachers, pastors, and Bible teachers who speak untruth and false theologies for whatever the garbage reasons they have.

During the siege of Jerusalem which was between 606-586 B.C. the majority of people in Jerusalem thought that the Lord would protect His holy city and the holy temple from the invasion of Babylon no matter what. There were two voices against them, just two voices – Jeremiah in Jerusalem and Ezekiel in Babylon. No matter what the others wanted to believe, the city and the nation were doomed due to the Lord's judgment against their idolatry.

A. FALSE CONFIDENCE

Ezekiel 12:21-28 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 22 "Son of man, what is this proverb that you people have about the land of Israel, which says, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision fails'? 23 Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will lay this proverb to rest, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel." But say to them, " The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision. 24 For no more shall there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25 For I am the Lord. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed; for in your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it," says the Lord God.' " 26 Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 27 "Son of man, look, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.' 28 Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "None of My words will be postponed any more, but the word which I speak will be done," says the Lord God.'"

The theme of this portion of the Scriptures is the nearness of God's judgment on Jerusalem and the land of Judah. The inhabitants of Jerusalem and the people who were in Babylon exile thought that whatever Jeremiah and Ezekiel said was nothing more than hot air by a couple of total losers.

How many times have we heard from unbelievers who told us, "Jesus said that He would return, but He hasn't for almost two thousand years. He won't return for another two thousand years"? Obviously those people have no idea about the fact what God promises, He keeps and He has never broken His promises, ever. His promises have been fulfilled and will be fulfilled at His precise timing.

People can predict the weather, well sort of, but they don't and cannot discern "the signs of times" as Jesus taught us.

Matthew 16:3 and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.

But because Ezekiel's prophecies had not been fulfilled immediately, the Jewish people were paying more attention to the false prophets than to the true Word of God. The false prophets' visions and words were soothing and encouraging. The people wanted to hear false encouragement rather than the truth.

The Lord graciously delayed His judgment so that people would repent. But to these Jewish people, they considered that the Lord's delay meant His judgment would happen in future generation or not going to happen at all.

Even if the Lord did delay His judgments, how could the Jewish people be content with knowing the fact that a future generation would be wiped out and the holy city and temple destroyed? They were like King Hezekiah when Isaiah rebuked him for his pride and warned him that Babylon would conquer Judah:

Isaiah 39:8 So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good!" For he said, "At least there will be peace and truth in my days."

This attitude of Hezekiah reminds me of what the politicians in Washington are doing now. They are wasting away the borrowed money from our future generation.

By the way, the Babylonian army breached the walls of Jerusalem and Ezekiel's prophecies came true in six years from the time this prophecy was declared.

B. FALSE CONFIDENCE

Ezekiel 13:1-12 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the Lord!' " 3 Thus says the Lord God: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! 4 O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts. 5 You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord. 6 They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the Lord!' But the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. 7 Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken." 8 Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Because you have spoken non-

sense and envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you," says the Lord God. 9 My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord God. 10 Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace--and one builds a wall, and they plaster it with untempered mortar -- 11 say to those who plaster it with untempered mortar, that it will fall. There will be flooding rain, and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear it down. 12 Surely, when the wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the mortar with which you plastered it?'"

From v6 to 9, the Lord repeated 4 times that He had nothing to do with these false prophets who gave false hope and sense of security to the Jewish people. The Lord said the same thing in Jeremiah 23. These false prophets spoke out of their own imaginations and self-induced messages much like the sign-language interpreter from South Africa.

They are the same kind of people who lead many believers to false theologies and faith nowadays. But the true problem is not caused by the false prophets or teachers, rather the people who want to hear their false messages.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

The Lord used the word 'untempered mortar' 5 times in the Book of Ezekiel. The Hebrew word for that is "taphel". Its definition is "foolish, unseasoned, whitewash, uncertain." In other words, instead of building a solid wall that can withstand a stormy wind, the false prophets encourage people to build thin walls and just make them look good.

Many Christians still are deceived for the false security of material prosperity, good health, and long life. Material prosperity and good health are not the central issue of life. Christ alone and total obedience to all his commands – these are the central issues of life.

It's a serious thing to be called of God and to speak His Word to His people. To assume a place of ministry without being called and gifted is arrogance, and to manufacture messages without receiving them from the Lord is presumption. The false prophets in Ezekiel's day were guilty of both.

A true prophet tells people what they need to hear, but a false prophet tells them what they want to hear. A true servant of God builds carefully on a strong foundation according to God's Word and keeps the wall in good condition, but a hireling builds carelessly and whitewashes things to make them look better.

Popularity is not a test of truth. History shows that those who spoke the truth were usually rejected by the majority, persecuted, and even killed. Jesus used the same image of a storm to warn us about false prophets in Matthew chapter 7. It's easy for people to say "Lord, Lord," but it's not easy to walk the narrow road and confront the crowd that's going in the opposite direction.

I like what the late German Bible teacher/pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer said:
"Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life."

Along with the Prosperity Gospel by Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, and Joel Osteen, there are more false and damnable theologies that have covers of Christianity: Emergent Church movement and Seeker Sensitive movement.

Emergent Church movement is far worse than the latter one, because it not only waters down the truth, it puts doubts in the hearts of naive and ignorant believers and unbelievers against the true Christianity.

They insist that truth is not absolute, but it is relative. However, truth is reality as it corresponds to the way things really are. But in reality absolute truth is absolute no matter where you are, no matter in what time you live. The bottom line is that to deny that there is absolute and moral truth is to deny God.

The Emergent Church leaders, such as Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, and Tony Jones, believe that the salvation from God allows not only those who believe in Jesus and follow Him, but also everybody including different religions, animals and all of God's creations. What they believe is known as 'Universalism'. I know several men who used to be Calvary Chapel pastors now became followers of the Emergent Church doctrines.

C. FALSE FAITHFULNESS

Ezekiel 14:12-14 The word of the Lord came again to me, saying: 13 "Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. 14 Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord God.

Why did the Lord choose these three godly men to mention here? For one thing, all three of them are identified in the Old Testament Scripture as righteous men. All of them were tested and proven faithful – Noah by the Flood, Daniel in the lions' den, and Job by painful trials from Satan. They were all men of faith. Noah's faith helped to save his family and animals; Daniel's faith saved his own life and the lives of his friends; and Job's faith saved his three friends from God's judgment.

However, the faith and righteousness of these three men could not be accredited to others. Noah's family had to trust God and individually chose to enter the ark; Daniel's friends individually chose to pray and trust God; and Job's friends individually chose to repent and bring the proper sacrifices. There is no such thing as "borrowed faith" or riding on someone else's "spiritual coat tails."

The responsibility of each person before God is a key subject in the Book of Ezekiel. God doesn't punish people because of the sins of others, nor will God accept the righteousness of others to compensate for the wicked deeds of sinners. This principle is made clear in both the Law of Moses and the covenant God made with Israel.

The only time God made an exception of this principle was when Jesus Christ His righteous Son died on the cross, because He suffered for the sins of the whole world. When we trust Jesus as Savior and Lord, we receive the gift of His righteousness and God accepts us because of His Son

D. APPLICATIONS

1) The time of the Lord's return is near. We all ought to watch and pray and be ready. In the meanwhile, we must spread the Good News of Jesus to everyone whom we come across.

- 2) What we have in our hearts affects what we see and how we live. If Christ is Lord in our hearts, then there will be no place for idols.
- 3) Loving and accepting the false prevents us from knowing and loving the truth and results in our becoming estranged from the Lord.