

Call to Obedience #341
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The Prophet who Spoiled the Stew

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There are many prophets today who spoil the stew. It has always been so and it will always be so (Matt. 24:11). One of the characteristics of a false prophet is that he uses any method or means he can think of in order to draw attention to himself. For him it is always more about himself than anything else. Today let us look at a man who, although he was not necessarily a false prophet, had many of the characteristics of one.

“And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said to his servant, ‘Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.’ So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were. Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, ‘Man of God, there is death in the pot!’ And they could not eat it. So he said, ‘Then bring some flour.’ And he put it into the pot and said, ‘serve it to the people, that they may eat.’ And there was nothing harmful in the pot” (2 Kings 4:38-41 NKJ).

First notice that Elisha, a true prophet, ministered in a time of want. There was a famine in the land. This was a very common situation in his days. Elisha had a school for prophets, as Elijah had before him. Unfortunately, most student prophets never graduate. They learn a few lessons and then they become restless and get a sense of importance and spin off to become half-baked, independent prophets. This was particularly obvious in the day of Elijah, for although Elijah had 50+ followers, he could not find a single prophet among them who qualified to receive his mantle. In other words, many start with good intentions, but few continue to the finish line. God looks for men who are willing to pay the price it takes to become nothing, so that He can be everything.

Here in this story about the stew there was a prophet who had things in reverse, as all false prophets do. His formula was not that of John the Baptist, who said, *“He must increase, but I must decrease”* (John 3:30), but rather, his formula was, *I must increase*. Observe that false prophets want to be noticed. They strive to get your attention and hold it, to get you to give them money for their books or their ministries or their seminars. Eventually they can pull you out of your local church, where you had a ministry of caring, of praying, of giving, of ministering to others. You end up in pajamas listening to them on Sunday mornings as your only source of spiritual inspiration. Ask yourself how many television prophets encourage you to go to your local church, to support it, to help the pastor, and engage with him fully in the work of the Lord?

The sons of the prophets were sitting before Elisha, in a meeting. Does this remind you of Jesus with His disciples? Before the service began Elisha had instructed his servant, Gehazi to prepare a very simple meal. Elisha did not want a fancy meal. He only wanted one cook. He did not want any of the son's of the prophets in the kitchen so as not to distract from the teaching session. Now, while the stew was simmering in the background, everyone's attention was fastened on Elisha, except for one man. He was there without being there. While his master taught, he was thinking how he could rise above the rest of his fellows, how he could improve his station. Finally, he slipped out of the service. Have you ever noticed that many a believer likes to sit in the back pew, near the exit. Watch out for those people. The back pews are often breeding grounds for malcontents, who like Absalom steal the hearts of God's people (2 Sam. 15:6). The minds of those in the back pews are easily distracted. Unless you have business to sit in the back, plant yourself close to the messenger. You help him more, and you get more help yourself.

So what took this one prophet out of the service is the idea that he could improve upon the meal. Perhaps he could improve upon the flavor, the nutrients, and the aroma of the stew. Shame on all of you who think you can improve upon what God has set before you; that you can improve on the bread of heaven, on the water from the rock; that you can improve upon the old-time religion. Friend, beware of people who want to add something to what God decided is adequate and full of blessings. Beware of those who think they can improve upon that which the Holy Spirit does in the sanctuary of the Lord.

God through Moses gave His people bread. Bread, and nothing else, bread without the garlic and onions of Egypt. Jesus gave them bread also, and added a little fish. But He said, *"I am the bread of life"* (John 6:48). The emphasis was on bread and nothing added. He could have added vegetables and fruits, but Jesus stayed with the old time religion, the bread religion. But what was in the heart of this one 'false prophet' was the same as what was in the hearts of the Israelites of old. They wanted something other than just bread. They wanted something more than what God chose for them to have. Remember, they wanted bread **and** quail. Please get this **and** out of your religion. Let it become an **only** religion, an only bread religion. The supernatural bread came from heaven, and was supernaturally healthy. The quail brought garbage: beaks and intestines, claws and feathers, which bred worms. The camp became filthy and thousands died. My friend, the church is dying from the garbage of the world that has been added to the pure bread of heaven. It is full of beaks and intestines, claws and feathers of the world. Listen, only that which is of the Holy Spirit, only that which is supernatural is good. We can only be fed by the Holy Spirit, everything added makes us sick. Everything else will kill us. Do not look to Egypt (the world) for the way to improve your church service. Don't look for the natural, only accept the supernatural.

So this prophet wanted to improve the stew. He went away from where the anointing was. He went into the field of human choice, of the self-life. No one told him to go there. He gathered wild gourds, then instead of tasting and testing what he gathered, he cut it up and put it into the pot. Are you getting a picture of a false prophet? He's not satisfied with the simple gospel, he's not satisfied with the master's plans, and he is not satisfied

to remain at the master's feet. He wants to add something that does not belong. He is not appointed to be a cook. But Self wants to be a better cook, a better prophet. His cooking is not under the authority of God's anointed one, and he does not test what he sets before others. He is so occupied with self, with self-promotion that he forgets the real needs of others. He becomes careless with others. He is reckless, rebellious, and he talks down the gospel as not being complete, as not being contemporary, as not attracting enough people.

What is Jesus trying to teach us here? After His resurrection, Jesus showed His disciples that the Old Testament is all about Him (Luke 24:27). Therefore, this text is about Jesus. We see Elisha as a type of Christ who sets soul food before his disciples. But a self-absorbed prophet, a wolf in sheep's clothing, is about to kill everybody because he thinks that the original diet is no longer all that is needed. Many a false prophet will say, "I sat under so-and-so's ministry but the Lord led me out. The Lord gave me a greater revelation." No my friend, these self-appointed cooks are under no one's authority. Jesus called these false prophets "hirelings" who leave the flock once they have exploited it.

But thank God, as soon as all the prophets had their first taste of the "improved" stew they cried out, "there's death in the pot!" Praise God that they shared some of Elisha's spiritual discernment, and because of this acuteness they lived to see another day. Oh, my friend, you desperately need to stay close to the men of God, to your Elisha, to those who have an intimate relationship with God, who can quickly smell, see and sense when evil is near. And eventually you, by the grace of God, will also come to this sensitivity. In a way, the stew represents the church. She was born clean and pure. But false prophets have corrupted her. They have added much which is not of the Holy Spirit. They've helped make her a church of spots and wrinkles and blemishes. But Jesus is able to cleanse her. As Elisha threw flour into the pot, and there was no longer harm in it, so Jesus by His precious blood is able to make His church, His bride white again.

Beware of false prophets. They are death to the church.

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