

## What Prophecy Looks Like

Sunday, April 19, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa  
Acts 2:31 *"...he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption."*

Isaiah 44:28 *"Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"*

- Introduction:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in one of his many essays, pressed the point that a preacher's stock in trade was inspiration, and if he regularly failed in this endeavor he deserved to be scorned. That inspiration is part of what it means to be prophetic. To be prophetic means to have a message that comes from the heart of God, and most people hunger for that. The famous theologian Karl Barth wrote of people coming to church on a Sunday and asking "if there was a word from the Lord." The Bible is full of messages that come from the heart of God. In fact, one can describe the whole book in that fashion. Today I'd like to consider that one of the ways we know that God is trustworthy is because He knows the end from the beginning. The Bible is full of examples designed to inspire and encourage us. Here's a few of my thoughts.

- Set the stage

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, in his famous sermon of that day, makes reference to the Book of Joel (2:28-32) and of Psalms and maintains that both are prophetic, they speak from the heart of God and that they foresaw events playing out before them, even though they lived long ago. In his comments on Psalms (16:8-11), Peter points out that David was writing, not from his own perspective, but that of the perspective of Christ. That when he wrote "for You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" he referred not to himself, but to Jesus. In this psalm and in others, we actually have access to the thoughts and prayer of the Lord. For today, I'd like to focus on one word, that speaks volumes to me.

- The key verb is "foreseeing"

When Peter, in that sermon, claimed that King David, in his psalms, was a prophet who foresaw Christ from his vantage point some centuries before. The word literally has the prefix meaning "before" with the verb meaning "to see". He saw (not necessarily with his eyes) something or someone before the person or action actually entered the stage of human endeavor. A famous example is the prophet Isaiah and the great Persian king Cyrus. Some modern theologians maintain that Isaiah had

two authors-the original and another who wrote under his name many years later. I don't agree with that view precisely because I believe that the Holy Spirit of God can reveal His heart to people, and he did so to Isaiah. What happened is that Isaiah mentioned a great king who would liberate Israel from captivity in Babylon for seventy years after they are overthrown and he mentions that the king's name is "Cyrus" several times. Isaiah prophesied from roughly 700 to 690 BC before he was murdered. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC. The great Persian King Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC. A year later, according to the historian Josephus, Cyrus is shown the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and reads his own name written at least 152 years before. Cyrus releases Israel from captivity and they start preparing to move back to Jerusalem. The Bible has many examples of people who "see before" so that we can know that there is a God who oversees and acts in our lives. That is a great example of "foreseeing".

- Application

If God knows that much about a person who does not (and may never have) followed Him, what does God have to say about every follower of Jesus whose name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life? (Revelation 20:12) The Bible tells us that the Lord directs the paths of those who trust in Him (Proverbs 3:5-6). What He plans to do in your lives was established long ago.

- Conclusion

Peter, in his great sermon, quoted from the Psalms and maintained that King David was not writing about himself but of the Messiah, and that the psalm gives us an insight to the Lord Jesus' thoughts and prayers. Such revelations and all true prophetic messages are designed to inspire us, to encourage and bolster our faith in that we serve a God who is all-powerful and close. He knows our days and all our ways from long before and the plans He has for us are good.