

God's Messengers



God's Disguises (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as I continue to share with you on our strange sounding theme for this week, "God's Disguises."

In my previous talks I gave you some reasons why God sometimes approaches us in a disguise. There are three things he doesn't want to do. He does not want to overawe us with his power, he does not want to entice us with his blessing, he does not want to satisfy mere intellectual curiosity. Rather, he wants that we desire God for himself, apart from his power, or blessing, or other benefit.

Yesterday I spoke about the most important and marvelous disguise in which God ever came upon the stage of human history, the disguise of the carpenter's son who was, in history, Jesus of Nazareth. The carpenter's son who ended his life executed on a Roman gibbet. This was a disguise that God used only once in human history.

But today I'm going to speak about a disguise that God has used many times in history and still continues to use today. The disguise is God's messengers. It's a principle in scripture that's demonstrated many, many times and emphasized to in scriptural teaching that God identifies himself with those whom he sends as his representatives. This means that the way we respond to God's messengers is counted by God as our response to God himself. We cannot reject God's messengers and claim to receive God. This is a thing that I'm afraid some people simply have not grasped.

Let's look at what Jesus says in some passages in the New Testament. In John 13:20 he says to His disciples:

> "I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I sent accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

You see, the principle goes all the way down from God the Father. God the Father sent Jesus the carpenter's son. Those who received Jesus received God the Father. Those who rejected Jesus rejected God the Father. But, the principle does not end there. Jesus in turn chose certain men, rather unlikely men. They weren't theologians, they weren't priests, they weren't highly educated; they were people like fishermen and tax collectors and people like that. People

whom the world wouldn't have esteemed very highly, and Jesus made them his disciples and sent them as his representatives. And He said, "The way people treat you is the way people treat me. If they receive you, they receive me; but if they reject you [though they may not see it], they're rejecting me, and if they reject me, they're also rejecting my Father." That's very emphatic, that verse. I want to read it again.

> "I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send, accepts me."

And, of course, the converse is true. Whoever rejects anyone I send, rejects me. Jesus states this more fully when He sent His first disciples out. In Matthew 10:11 and following, He said:

> "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you."

You see, that's a remarkable fact that the messengers of Jesus have the authority and the ability to transmit his peace to those who received them. But, they can withhold his peace from those who do not receive them in a worthy way. Then he goes on:

> "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town."

That was a sign of total disowning something. To shake the dust off your feet was to say I accept no responsibility for you.

Then he goes on with a very remarkable statement:

> "I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town."

That's amazing, isn't it? Sodom and Gomorrah were cities that were guilty of a sin that God judged and condemned utterly. God judged them with a remarkable, dramatic overthrow, setting them forth as an example to all who should in future times, indulge in that sin. That was something terrible! But Jesus says it'll be worse for people who reject his messengers than it was for Sodom and Gomorrah! I hope I can show you how serious it is that you do not reject the messengers whom Jesus sends.

Then he goes on to say:

> "I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves, therefore, be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves."

See, there's nothing very impressive about a sheep, is there? Jesus could have used a lot of other figures. He could have said, "I'm sending you out like lions, or like leopards, or like horses," all creations with some kind of impressive features. I don't think a sheep has ever impressed anybody. I don't hear a sheep has ever terrified anybody. He said, "That's how I'm going to send you. You'll be in the midst of wolves, but you'll be like sheep."

See, Jesus does not want to impress us with power or majesty in order to be received. He wants us to be received as he is himself. And then he goes on to say at the end of that 10th chapter of Matthew:

> "He who receives you receives me. And he who receives me receives the one who sent me."

The same principle again. "If they receive you, they're receiving me. If they receive me, they're receiving the Father who sent me. But, if they reject you, they're rejecting me. If they're rejecting me, they're also rejecting the Father." Then he wraps it up in a kind of principle.

> "Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward."

If you look in the Bible, God's prophets were some pretty strange people sometimes. They wore strange clothes, they did strange things, they turned up at unexpected moments, they made most unwelcome statements, and sometimes they just walked off the stage after that. You probably couldn't find a less conventional character anywhere in literature than the prophet Elijah!

But Jesus says it pays to discern the prophet beneath that unconventional or even unacceptable exterior because if you identify the prophet and receive him, you receive the same reward as the prophet. And, if you identify a righteous man and receive him, you receive the same reward as that

righteous man.

Let me sum that up. To reject the messengers of Jesus was a worse sin than that of Sodom. I've been saying that one of the disguises God uses is his messengers. God comes to us in the form of his messengers. The ones whom he sends to represent him he identifies himself with him, and the way we received them or rejected them is counted as the way we receive or reject God himself.

Now, I want to take two examples, rather interesting ones. The first is from the Old Testament. It's the example of the judge Barak. In the time of Barak Israel had been invaded and was being oppressed by an alien army more numerous, more powerful, much better equipped and armed than Israel. And God called on apparently a young man named Barak who was apparently not a very well known figure, to lead Israel to victory against this invading army. Barak was a rather retiring kind of young man, and he did not feel qualified and so he went to the prophetess of that day whose name was Deborah and he asked her to go with him. So, we see that really Barak wasn't a very impressive figure. Nevertheless, he was courageous and obedient. He led Israel's army to victory and the alien army was defeated and driven out.

After that, Deborah the prophetess sang a song about the victory, celebrating it. She said various things about various tribes in Israel. Some had come to help Barak, some had refused. And she spoke in particular about one village which is not mentioned again anywhere in the scripture called Meroz. And, in her song this is what she said about Meroz: (Jud. 5:23)

> "Curse Meroz!, said the angel of the Lord. Curse its people bitterly because they did not come to help the Lord, to help the Lord against the mighty."

Can you see that? They thought they didn't come to help Barak. They dismissed him. Perhaps they ridiculed him. But God didn't count what they'd done as done toward Barak but as done toward himself. And a curse came upon that village because they hadn't come to help Barak. And failing to help Barak they'd failed to help the Lord himself.

The second example is John he Baptist. John the Baptist was the forerunner sent before Jesus to prepare his way, the representative. But Herod the tetrarch didn't like John because he questioned his morality. He had him imprisoned and then one night when a dancing girl came and pleased him, probably with a semi nude dance, he vowed that he'd give anything she asked for. And, to get revenge on John the Baptist—because she was the daughter of the woman Herod wanted to marry—this girl asked for the head of John the Baptist and, in order to keep his oath, Herod had him executed and his head brought on a plate right then and there. Later on, just after he'd been arrested Jesus was brought before Herod to be tried and this is what it says here, and I want you to listen. (Luke 23:6–9)

> "When Herod saw Jesus he was greatly pleased because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he'd heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer."

Can you see that? He had rejected John the Baptist and he couldn't get any answer from Jesus. The principle is if you reject God's servants and messengers, you can't expect to hear from God some other way.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time telling you more about God's disguises.

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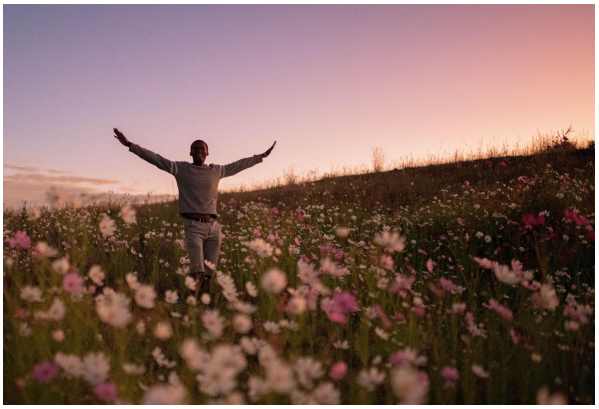

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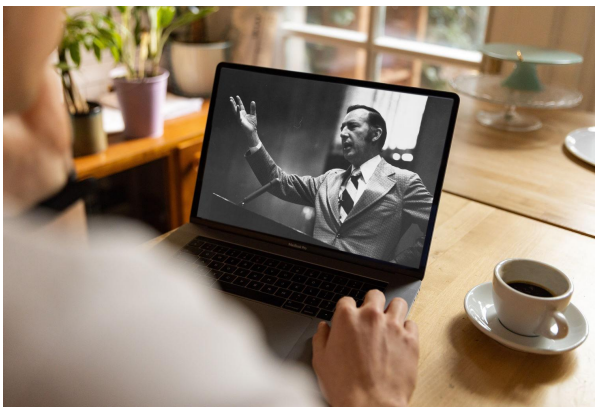

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