

SCHOLARS WHO STUDY OR PROPHETS WHO PRAY

Which Is Our Greater Need At This Time In The Messianic Community?

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In the Body of Messiah we always need scholars who study and teach. It is important for God's people to think rightly about God. The things that God has revealed about Himself are found in the written Scriptures. Therefore our thinking about God must be based on the Bible. Without a correct understanding of the Bible, we cannot think rightly about God. Therefore it is always important and necessary to have scholars who study and teach and transmit the revelation of God's Word to God's people.

We need scholars who study and teach, but we also need prophets who pray and prophesy. From what I have seen in today's Messianic Community, I'd say we have a greater need for prophets who pray and prophesy than for more scholars who study and teach.

I do not say this to discourage anyone from becoming a scholar and teacher. If you are called by God to become a teacher, do not let me discourage you from pursuing that call. God forbid. But as you pursue your call to be a scholar who studies and teaches, pray that God will call other disciples to become prophets who will pray and prophesy.

Scholars who study and teach, along with prophets who pray and prophesy, provide balance in

the Body. Yeshua spoke about the need to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23f). Prophets correspond to spirit; teachers correspond to truth. Teachers transmit truth to disciples and get them grounded in sound doctrine. Prophets stir the spirits of disciples and inspire them to do exploits for the Lord. Teachers provide instruction; prophets provide inspiration. Teachers transmit knowledge; prophets transmit zeal.

Prophets without teachers will produce disciples who fulfill the scripture that speaks of "zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). Teachers without prophets will produce disciples who fulfill the scripture that says "Knowledge puffeth up" (1 Cor. 8:1).

In today's Messianic Community, I see more people puffed up with knowledge than people with misguided zeal. I do see some zeal in the Messianic Community. Unfortunately, most of the zeal I see is not a zeal to save sinners and make them into disciples. Rather, it is a zeal for head knowledge, whether it is knowledge about the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, or knowledge about the details of the Biblical calendar, or knowledge about certain Hebrew words and letters, or knowledge about ancient Near

East history, or knowledge about the Temple, or knowledge about end-time prophecy, or knowledge about conspiracy theories, or knowledge about UFOs, nephilim, and the true shape of the earth.

I am not mocking or belittling true knowledge. I am just pointing out that without zeal for the weightier matters, "knowledge puffeth up" (1 Cor. 8:1). I see a lot of Messianics who are puffed up with knowledge. They are eager to acquire more knowledge, but not zealous to save sinners and turn them into disciples. People are not zealous for good works to glorify God; they are zealous for more knowledge to further puff up their already-inflated egos.

We need a heavy dose of humility in the Messianic Movement to bring us to our senses and get our priorities in the right order. If we know (or think we know) the correct way to pronounce God's Hebrew name, how does our knowledge (whether real or presumed) benefit the lost sinners around us who do not even know the God whose name we allegedly know how to pronounce?

If we know (or think we know) exactly how to follow the Biblical calendar, how does that knowledge (whether real or presumed) benefit lost sinners who are not even aware of the existence of a Biblical calendar? The same goes for knowledge about Hebrew words, history, the Temple, and end-time prophecy.

None of our knowledge,

whether real or presumed, will help a lost sinner unless he is first transformed into a saved saint. And he will not be saved unless he hears and believes the basic gospel message, as it is written:

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:13-15).

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he said that it had been reported to him "that there are contentions among you" (1 Cor. 1:11). Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their contentions, and urged them to "all speak the same thing" and to have "no divisions" and to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

Paul reminded the Corinthians that when he first came to them, he came with the simple gospel message:

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1f).

During his year and six months

of teaching God's Word in Corinth (Acts 18:11), Paul eventually taught the Corinthians more than the basic gospel message, of course. But he started with the basic gospel message, to bring the corrupt Corinthian sinners to salvation.

We cannot say with certainty exactly what Paul taught the saints from the Word of God during his year and a half in Corinth. But if Paul's Epistles, plus all the other Epistles of the New Testament, offer any clues, it appears that most of the instruction from the Apostles concerned basic stuff like behavior, character, integrity, faithfulness, how to treat and minister to others, how to maintain order in the assembly, etc. We have no record of the Apostles teaching the saints about the deeper meaning of paleo-Hebrew word pictures, or conspiracy theories, or UFOs, or stuff like that.

However, it appears that then, as now, there were a lot of wanna-be Torah teachers who turned aside and swerved off the path onto various tangents:

"Now the end [i.e., the goal] of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1 Tim. 1:5-7).

We have this same problem today in the Messianic Movement. We always need good teachers

who are morally, mentally, and doctrinally sound. But along with teachers, we also need prophets who pray and prophesy to bring balance to the Body and to call the Body back to the weightier matters.

I believe that our scarcity of prophets in the Messianic Community is one reason that we have so many wanna-be Torah teachers who have swerved away from the weightier matters and turned aside to vain jangling, and one reason that so many gullible, unstable people swallow these aberrant teachings. There is no prophetic voice to call people back to their first love for the Lord.

I am a teacher, not a prophet. However, I am not speaking here as a teacher. I am speaking here as a prophetic voice. I am telling you that the Lord is pleased with many things in the Messianic Community, nevertheless He has somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else He will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

No, I am not a prophet. But I do not need to be a prophet to prophesy, "for ye may all prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:31). I am sharing this prophetic word, adapted from Revelation 2:4-5 with a prophetic voice. If the shoe fits, wear it. If it does not apply to you, ignore it. Maybe you have not left your first love for the Lord. But many have.

Those who have left their first love need to remember from whence they have fallen, and repent and do the first works. Get back to the basics, before you fall even deeper and end up embracing some dangerous, destructive error.

There are two sources of error. One is insufficient knowledge of the Scriptures. The other is insufficient experience with the power of God's Spirit. I base this on Yeshua's statement to the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29).

Error can come from either or both of these two weaknesses, either from insufficient knowledge of the Scriptures, or from insufficient experience with the power of God.

Based on my observation, I'd say that the typical, average Messianic disciple usually knows the Scriptures better than the typical, average non-Messianic Christian does. This is not a criticism of Christians; it is just my observation. Most Messianics are more familiar with the overall content of the Bible simply because most non-Messianic Christians do not spend as much time studying the Old Testament. A typical Messianic spends a lot of time studying the Old Testament, especially the Torah.

A typical Messianic usually has a fairly good knowledge of the basic content of the Bible. However, a typical Messianic usually has little if any first-hand experience with the power of God's Spirit.

I have read quite a bit about the

history of the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals put a lot of emphasis on the power of God, but not so much emphasis on the knowledge of the Scriptures. As a result, some Pentecostals erred and embraced some ideas that were contrary to the Scriptures. Some Messianics do the exact opposite. They put a lot of emphasis on knowing the Scriptures, but not so much emphasis on the importance of experiencing the power of God's Spirit. As a result, they too err and embrace some ideas that are contrary to the Scriptures.

We need both spirit and truth. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:23). We need both the truth of the Scriptures and the power of God's Spirit. As I said a few years ago, we need a Pentecostal Penteteuchal revival.

Knowledge is important, but knowledge alone puffeth up. The Messianic Movement has lots of knowledge, but very little first-hand experience with the power of God. We are lopsided and imbalanced, because there are not enough prophets to pray and prophesy. To avoid error, we need more than just more knowledge. We need the primitive power of the Holy Ghost that some of the old-timers experienced. And that power will come only through prayer. If we start having some old-fashioned, fire-baptized, Pentecostal prayer meetings and pour out our hearts to the Lord, maybe some prophets will emerge and prophesy, and bring balance to the Body. □