

# **Do Not Despise Prophecies**

By Patrick Swayne

People living in first world nations today find themselves in a unique situation: an “information overload.” This is nothing truly new – for years information and learning have abounded in these developed and educated societies. However, with the internet joining visual (e.g. television), aural (e.g. radio), and printed media as a source of information, the amount of information available to the average person has infinitely increased. A person could sit for the rest of his life watching television, or looking at websites on the internet, or reading books or newspapers, and never take in all the information that could be obtained in any of these resources, let alone all of them.

This information overload has spilled over into the realm of religion: before there were hamburger companies saying “have it your way,” there were religions saying the same. The confusing and conflicting state of religion as we know it is the work of Satan; Satan knows that there is power in confusion, “for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). Peter describes the followers of Satan who work in religion as the “untaught and unstable” who twist the scriptures “to their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16). The response of many has either been to side with one of these false religions or to reject religion altogether. Both responses effectively cause one to quench the Spirit by rejecting the word of God.

While they did not face the 32,000 plus denominations that truth seekers must navigate their way around today, the Thessalonians faced their own information overload. In addition to the physical persecutions they underwent, they were flooded with false teachers. The onslaught of false teachers had caused some to begin to despise prophesying – not because they despised religion, but because they were tired of false teaching. Paul had previously commended them for their steadfastness in the face of adversity (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8). He was now telling them in regards to prophesying not to throw out the baby with the bathwater – “do not despise prophecies (1 Thessalonians 5:20).

In Paul’s day, prophesying was God’s way of delivering His message to people miraculously through a speaker. While there are no men teaching under miraculous guidance today, there is a message from God – the Bible – and there are many false teachers who pervert that message either knowingly or unwittingly. Rather than reject all religion because of the confusion caused by many, it is the duty of each man to find the true message of God and the true religion which God provides in the pages of His book. Men ought not to reject Bible teaching because of the multitude of false teachers.

More will be discussed on this point next week with the closely related statement found in the next verse: “test all things.” However, the point of this passage and the message it teaches to Christians is clear: Don’t reject God’s word because of the false teachers and false religions that fill the world today. Truth can be found; it is in God’s word and is available to all who diligently look for it: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7).