

SUNDAY SCHOOL  
STARTS SEPTEMBER 15TH  
9:30-10:30 AM  
KINDERGARTEN TO ADULTS

JOIN US!!



Bethany Free Lutheran Church  
451 34th St.  
Astoria, OR 97103

### "Is the Bible Enough"

I recently was doing some research into religious trends in America and came across something that I had been oblivious to, the NAR. The New Apostolic Reformation is a shadowy organization that is not an official denomination, but rather a set of beliefs held mostly by Pentecostal faith groups that make some bold statements. Strangely enough, some theologians deny that the NAR even exists, while others are quick to point out the growing influence of the NAR and its dangers. One website I found that seeks to highlight dangerous religious sects named a wide range of people they claim belong to the NAR, people like Oral Roberts, Steve Furtick, Benny Hinn, Paul Crouch, Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer, and Dutch Sheets to name only a few.

A few core beliefs of the NAR is the "Kingdom Gospel" that is over and above the simple Gospel taught in the Bible, a non-Biblical portrayal of Jesus, a special apostolic authority granted to those considered modern apostles, and special prophetic words, or a secret knowledge given by God to NAR "prophets". If you come across someone that calls themselves an apostle or prophet today, then you have likely found someone who has embraced the NAR and its teachings.

I was stunned to learn that this belief system existed, and had taken root so deeply. As I watched a series of interviews by theologians both for and against the NAR, I became troubled that another heretical organization has surfaced to lead people away from the simple yet profound truth of God's Word. While this latest heretical offshoot of Christianity is troubling, dangerous, and evil; it is in some ways nothing new. False doctrines have been introduced into the world since the devil questioned Eve by asking, "Did God really say?" The enemy loves to blur the truth of God's Word so that a new teaching appears good while it is really evil.

History shows that the early church during the writing of the book of Acts also had problems with groups like the NAR. One such group were those called the Gnostics. Like the NAR, Gnostics taught of a secret knowledge that only a select few had. The simple truths of the Bible were just not enough. And like modern heretical groups, gnostic beliefs were hard to define because they always seemed to change, adapt, and develop. So how do we protect ourselves from lies and deception of groups like the NAR or Gnostics? Should we all study as many of the false beliefs as possible in order to be better prepared? While it is tempting to begin naming and highlighting all the various cults, movements, and organizations that have led, or are currently leading people astray, that is not the most effective way to deal with this issue.

What worked in the early church days, is the same thing that works today, studying and understanding the truth of God's Word. Every "new" belief system, or idea should be weighed against the clear teaching of God's Word. Take for instance a modern-day prophetic word from God, that someone claiming to be a prophet gives. And when I mean prophetic word, I don't mean the common understanding of prophecy which is simply proclaiming truth which all good preachers should do every Sunday from the pulpit. Most who say they have a "modern day" prophetic utterance, attempt to say that they are announcing a special word from God about a future event that is about to happen.

Let's take a look at what God's Word says about this concept. The Bible does seem to leave open the possibility of having prophetic announcements from God in modern times. Acts 2:17-21 is a quote from the book of Joel 2:28-32. These verses basically talk about people having dreams, visions, and prophetic announcements. The context of what is happening in Acts is describing Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, and people in fact did behave very differently. Furthermore, we also

see the church universal being opened to more than just Jews, but even the Gentiles. This was a major shift in thinking, and practice. Some theologians believe that this shift, and the working of the Holy Spirit that allowed people to do some amazing things during Pentecost is over, and since we have the revealed word of God (the Bible) we no longer need the prophetic gifting, and it is closed.

Others would argue against this belief and point out that there appears to be a future aspect of people having dreams, visions, and prophetic utterances shortly before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus. If that is indeed true how then are we to judge if a prophetic word from the Lord is indeed from the Lord? 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." We are commanded by God to not just accept supernatural messages such as prophetic words, but are to test them. The simplest manner to test these spirits, and their messages is to compare them to the Scriptures. When Paul preached to a group called the Bereans they didn't just accept what he preached without first seeing if it agreed with the Scriptures, "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11)

Another important litmus test to determine the validity of a prophetic word is simply this, has it come true? In Deuteronomy 18:20-22, God clearly explains a very simple test for anyone claiming to be a prophet from the Lord, have they ever been wrong? If they are wrong one time, they are not from the Lord, and in ancient Israel they should be killed. "But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." And if you say in your heart, "How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?"—when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him." To be clear we are not to go around killing false prophets today, but the point is that if they get one wrong prophecy, that prophet isn't from the Lord, and we don't need to worry about what they say.

While I personally believe that God does grant supernatural visions, dreams, and possibly prophetic words- those revelations from God would always line up with Scripture, and always come to pass. I also believe that more often than not, God reveals things to people in supernatural ways when they do not have the clear Word of God available to them. Cultures and people groups that have been deprived of clear Biblical preaching and teaching, are more in need of supernatural revelations than others, because they lack the Bible. Fortunately for Americans, we have many solid and worthy translations of the Bible in our language, which makes supernatural revelations much less important. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17 teaches that, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Simply put, the Bible is enough!

While it may seem that we are living in the time right before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus, and that things are going from bad to worse, and that we need now more than ever supernatural revelations from God, from modern day prophets and apostles, don't buy it! Read, study, and listen to the God's Word. The study of the Bible is all we need, and all we will ever need. Next time you hear of a new cult, or some supernatural "word of the Lord," just smile and remember, God speaks to you every time you read His Word, and it is all you will ever need.

Pastor Rich Carr

## Worship With Us

8:45 A.M. Glad Tidings Radio 1370 A.M.

9:30 A.M. Sunday School (starting Sept. 15th)

11:00 A.M. Worship Services

## Live Stream

We live stream our 11:00 A.M. Sunday worship services on Subsplash. If you prefer Facebook we are still there. Sunday sermons are also posted the same day on our YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@bethanyfreelutheranastoria3012/featured>. You can find links to all of these on our website at [www.bethanyfree.com](http://www.bethanyfree.com)



**SUNDAY SCHOOL**  
**Starting Sunday, September 15th,**  
**9:30am-10:30am**  
**Kindergarten- Adults**  
**Learning God's Word**  
**Growing in Faith Transforming lives**



## Men's Prayer Breakfast

Will be September 14th 8:00 A.M. Cooking starts around 7:15am if you would like to help. We would love to have more men join us.

## Deacons & Trustees Meeting

Will be Tuesday, September 10th at 6 P.M.

## Bethany Sewing Ministry

Will be starting up Thursday, September 19th, 10am. All sewing skills are welcome. A lunch is provided. We work on quilts that are mostly sent to AFLC Alaska Missions in Naknek, AK

## Brown Bag Ministry

Every Tuesday, 1:30 P.M. Weekly our Brown Bag Ministry prepares brown bag lunches that are distributed in the community, we are always grateful for volunteers.

## Opportunities to Serve

Check out the sign up sheets on the bulletin board for SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER & NOVEMBER! You can sign up to provide after church treats, flowers for the altar, greet and hand out bulletins before church or read the scriptures during church. If any of these sound like something you would like to do, sign up! Thank you!

## Confirmation Class

Confirmation class will be starting September 26<sup>th</sup>. They will be meeting directly after school at the Astoria Middle School this year on Thursdays. A letter will be going out to confirmands.

## WMF Meeting

Women's Missionary Federation Bible Study will meet Thursday, September 12th at 11am at church. All Ladies are Welcome!

## Women's Bible Study

The women's Bible study and fellowship time is held on the 4th Tuesday of every month at the parsonage. It will be September 24th, 7pm this month. All women are welcome.

## New Members Class

If you are interested in learning more about what we at Bethany believe, or if you are interested in becoming a member, we invite you to attend our new member class. Our next classes will be September 15th and 29th. They will take place downstairs in the fellowship hall after church (12:30 P.M.). If you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact Pastor Rich.

## New Multi-Purpose Building

The City has finally approved our application to construct the new building. We have the Building Permits in hand and construction will commence soon. We hope to have completion by late Summer/early Fall 2025.

## Pastor on Vacation

Pastor Rich will be gone September 1-8 and 18-25. If you need help with anything you may contact any of our Deacons & Trustees. Eric Paulson, Lewis Nimmo, Mickey Cereghino, Don Fisher, Dick Magathan and Dennis Rund. If you have any prayer requests you can email [bethanyaflc@gmail.com](mailto:bethanyaflc@gmail.com) and I will forward it along.

## COMING EVENTS

### Congregational Meeting

Sunday, October 27th, at 12:30pm. We will be discussing the new Constitution and Bylaws being proposed. Draft copies of the proposed will be available in September for the Congregation to review prior to the October meeting so you can be ready to discuss.

### District Conference in Lake Stevens, Washington



**HE COMES IN  
THE CLOUDS**

Free End-Times Bible Conference



ELIM LUTHERAN CHURCH  
**October 4-5**  
With special guest **Steve Gregg**



For more info call 425-344-1911 or visit [elimlutheran.net](http://elimlutheran.net)