

# False Prophets: What the Bible Says About Them

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# **1 False Prophets**

## **1.1 What the Bible Says About Them**

### **1.1.1 The Characteristics of False Prophets**

1. They are greedy for gain
2. They prophesy lies
3. They speak even when God did not send them
4. They steal words from one another
5. They distort the words of the living God
6. They give people a false sense of peace
7. They dress the wound of God's people instead of healing them
8. They do not expose people's sins
9. They whitewash the wicked deeds of the people
10. They turn God's grace into a license for immorality
11. They dishearten the hearts of the righteous
12. They come in sheep's clothing
13. They secretly introduce destructive heresies
14. They climb in some other way
15. Their fruit will help you recognize them
16. They distort the truth to draw away disciples after them
17. They are grumblers and fault finders
18. They slander celestial beings
19. They corrupt the teaching about Jesus Christ

### **1.1.2 Role of People in the Boom of False Prophets**

- When people love to listen to lies there is danger
- When people keep seeking prophets instead of the Lord there is danger
- When people encourage false prophets to have dreams, then there is danger
- When people close their ears to the truth there is danger
- When people entertain friendship with the world then there is danger
- When people try to put their legs in two boats at once there is danger

## **2 Introduction**

Jesus warned about false prophets. He also told that their coming will be a sign of the end times. Their purpose, He said, is to try and deceive the people by performing great signs and miracles (Matthew 24:24,25). You would be wise to listen to Jesus' warning.

You would be surprised to know that God gave detailed warning to the Israelite people about false prophets even 600 years before the birth of Christ through prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Even during the time of Moses (1500 years before Christ), God had warned about prophets who would try to lead people to follow other gods and worship them. God warned that these prophets should not be listened to even if a miraculous sign or wonder they had announced came to pass. Instead they were to know that God was testing His people to find out whether they loved Him with all their heart and soul (Deuteronomy 13:1–5). You would be wise to listen to these warnings too.

The amazing thing about these warnings that God has provided in the Bible is that the modern false prophets also show the same characteristics shown by false prophets of Old Testament times. Therefore you should have a good knowledge about what the Bible says about false prophets. This is important because God clearly said that His people, including you, are destroyed from lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). This article is intended to help you easily locate the various characteristics of false prophets mentioned in the Bible.

Another shocking truth that you are going to learn is the role of people in the success of these false prophets. Therefore it is most important to be on your guard to make sure that knowingly or unknowingly you don't encourage or sponsor false prophets. Note that Jesus has asked you to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves because you have been sent out like sheep among wolves (Matthew 10:16).

Look at the following characteristics of false prophets the Bible mentions (All references are from NIV):

## 2.1 False Prophets Are Greedy for Gain

The world is greedy about money. False prophets are more so. Even though Jesus taught to store up treasures in heaven and not on earth (Matthew 6:19,20), these false prophets try to grab money from people through deceitful means (Jeremiah 6:13, 8:10b). Peter noted that these *false teachers, in their greed, will exploit you with stories they have made up* (2 Peter 2:3).

He further warned that they are “experts in greed” and they follow the practices of Balaam, “who loved the wages of wickedness” (2 Peter 2:14,15). Jude says the same thing: “they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error” (Jude 11). When you think about the greed of false prophets, you also need to remember that Jesus had warned that the thief comes to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10).

Contrast with God’s Word: Jesus came to Give to you; while false prophets try to  
Take away from you!

Paul also wrote about people who think godliness is a means to financial gain. He added: “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:5,6). Clearly, love of money, which is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10) is characteristic of false prophets.

And isn’t it amazing to note the modern and current relevance of these words about how those in religious authority treat God’s flock: “Their buyers slaughter them and go unpunished. Those who sell them say, ‘Praise the Lord, I am rich!’ Their own shepherds do not spare them” (Zechariah 11:5). Yes, modern false prophets also praise God for their riches; made out of squeezing money out of their flock!

Manipulation in the Name of Blessings: <http://www.lovesark.net/everlastinglove/index.php/manipulation>

## 2.2 False Prophets Prophecy Lies

When prophets prophecy lies, God describes it as a “horrible and shocking thing” (Jeremiah 5:30,31).

We live in a day of much prophetic utterances. You would be wise to keep in mind that there is a possibility that some prophets might lie. Real examples are recorded in 1 Kings 13:18 and Jeremiah 27:16. In this context you should also heed the general warning which says: “When words are many, sin is not absent” (Proverbs 10:19a).

Again, God warns that these prophets prophecy lies in His name: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds” (Jeremiah 14:14).

He continues to warn not to listen to these false prophets who fill you with false hopes by speaking visions from their own minds. God says that these words do not come from the mouth of the Lord (Jeremiah 23:16). Prophet Isaiah points out that the prophets who teach lies mislead the people (Isaiah 9:15,16).

*God also exposes one of the prime methods of such false prophets who prophesy lies. They say, "I had a dream! I had a dream!" (Jeremiah 23:25). If you listen to prophets of today, you'll often hear them say these words, "I had a dream! I had a dream!" We're not trying to say that all prophets who talk about their dreams are false prophets. But you should know that this is a method that God has exposed.*

Contrast with God's Word: God says, "Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" (Jeremiah 23:28). So, God's priority is made clear here. He wants His servants to speak His word faithfully! The contrast is clear. The dreams of prophets is like straw (Jeremiah 23:28) when compared to the awesome power of God's word, which is like fire and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces (Jeremiah 23:29)! They would be wise to know this truth: "Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it?" (Lamentations 3:37).

Jeremiah has recorded God's warning about prophets who prophesied lies in God's name during his time (Jeremiah 27:10, 14–16). Prophet Ezekiel also has recorded God's warning about such prophets: They prophesy out of their own imagination. They follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. They are like jackals among ruins. The Lord has not sent them. Their visions are false and their divinations a lie. They say, "The Lord declares" even when the Lord has not sent them or spoken to them. Yet they expect their words to be fulfilled (Ref. Ezekiel 13:2, 3, 6, 7).

Clearly, prophesying lies in God's name is characteristic of false prophets.

### **2.3 False Prophets Steal Words from One Another**

This is yet another characteristic of false prophets. When they finish telling their dreams they start to quote each other to support their own agenda.

God warns about such behavior specifically: "Therefore," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me." "Yes," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The Lord declares.' Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send them or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord (Jeremiah 23:30–32).

Jude further explains that such godless men "boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage" (Jude 16b). If you listen carefully to their talk you'll discover that this description is fully true.

God also warned against the false prophets *because they distorted the words of the living God*. They did so by substituting their own words and trying to give it the authority of God's word. They thus tried to be "the oracle of the Lord" and pretended to give valuable advice or information. But the Lord warned that they should not use the words "the oracle of the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:36) when they were distorting the words of God.

Contrast with God's Word: God's word is truth (John 17:17) and they are unchanging (Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 5:18). But false prophets lie and steal words from one another and in the process distort the words of the living God.

We live in days when people give great importance to prophetic utterances than God's Word. The truth is that people do not try to read and understand the Bible. Instead they find it easy to listen to false prophets who steal words from each other to promote false hopes in the minds of people. *The greater danger is that the false prophets squeeze in their own ideas into the explanation of God's Word.* Therefore, always remember that your safety from such people who quote each other is in reading the Bible with much prayer to God to help you understand His Word.

A Note of Encouragement: <http://www.lovesark.net/biblenyou/brp07.html>

## **2.4 False Prophets Fail to Warn**

False prophets never warn people of coming judgment. Instead they give people a false sense of security by proclaiming peace, when there is no peace. God compared this false sense of security to a flimsy wall which the false prophets whitewash to make everything seem quiet, good, and beautiful on the outside. God warned that He will make this whitewashed wall of false peace collapse (Ezekiel 13:10–16).

Jeremiah also recorded God's complaint against these false prophets: "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11). God even pointed out how unashamed these kind of prophets are when they say so: "Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not know even how to blush" (Jeremiah 6:15a, 8:12a). The truth is that such behavior has become a habit with modern false prophets. They are not at all bothered that they are proclaiming false peace to the people.

When such prophets proclaim false peace there is a greater danger. Jeremiah lamented thus when the people of Judah were carried into captivity: "The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity. The oracles they gave you were false and misleading" (Lamentations 2:14). It is clear that a true prophet of the Lord will declare to his people their sins and ask them to repent of the same to escape God's judgment. And only a true prophet of the Lord who is "filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord" can declare to his people their sin and transgression (Micah 3:8).

Jeremiah pointed out another wicked thing the false prophets do. They give people false hopes and speak visions from their own minds (Jeremiah 23:16). And they keep saying to people who despise God, "The Lord says: You will have peace" and to those who follow the stubbornness of their hearts, they say, "No harm will come to you" (Jeremiah 23:17). This kind of behavior has become very common with prophets of today. They pamper people, who despise God; and stubborn-hearted people who never repent, with soothing words. But the important question to be asked about such prophets is this: "But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word?" (Jeremiah 23:18).



Contrast with God's Word: False prophets fail to warn. But God has appointed his prophets to be watchmen. They are to hear the words that God speaks to them and give warning to the people (Ezekiel 3:17, 33:7). And if he failed to give warning, God held the watchman accountable for the blood of those whom he failed to warn (Read Ezekiel 3:16–21 and 33:1–9)!

Would anyone dare to be a prophet of the Lord in the light of such severe accountability that God demands from him? Yet how many people proclaim themselves prophets of the Lord without declaring to people their sins!

Instead all you hear from them constantly is, "God bless you!" They fail to tell people that God's love to you is unconditional while His blessings are given to you based on your obedience to God's Word.

Conditional Answer to Prayer: <http://www.lovesark.net/prayer/pathways/chapters/chapter018.html>

## **2.5 Three Bad Things False Prophets Do**

### **2.5.1 False Prophets Whitewash Wicked Deeds.**

One of the great dangers from false prophets is that they close their eyes to evil in the society. They fail to inspire people to live righteously. They also remain indifferent to the wicked deeds of people. Instead of condemning such practices and courageously confronting them like Amos the prophet who said: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12b), these false prophets "whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations" (Ezekiel 22:28).

Contrast with God's Word: Even at that time God was looking for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before Him in the gap, to warn the people to turn from their wickedness and perhaps to intercede for them (Ezekiel 22:30).

But sadly God found none and therefore He decided to pour out His wrath on them. This is because the prophets failed to do their duty.

### **2.5.2 False Prophets Encourage Sexual Immorality.**

The Bible clearly declares, "*It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality*" (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

But false prophets can encourage sexual immorality either by their own example or by not teaching God's high standards of purity. Jesus pointed out the example of a woman called Jezebel who called herself a prophetess (note that God did not appoint her to be so): "By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality" (Revelation 2:20b). So, wrong kind of teaching can mislead God's servants into sexual immorality. You need to be on your guard against any wrong teaching which encourages sexual immorality. God is against His people who tolerate such false teachers or prophets (Revelation 2:20a).

Contrast with God's Word: We usually judge people by their outward pious behavior. False prophets who live sexually immoral lives or encourage others to do so can appear to be saints. But God cannot be deceived by their outward show for He says, "I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds" (Revelation 2:23b).

Jeremiah speaks of prophets who "commit adultery and live a lie" (Jeremiah 23:14); while Peter says, "With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable" (2 Peter 2:14). They promise people freedom "while they themselves are slaves of depravity" (2 Peter 2:19). Jude adds, "They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality" (Jude 4); and "these dreamers pollute their own bodies" (Jude 8).

Changing the grace of God into a license for immorality is to be specially noted. Today, many servants of God have made the cross and Jesus' blood so cheap by whitewashing the sins of the people who are part of their ministry. They say that under God's grace you are free to do anything since God forgives you. This attitude of deliberately keeping on sinning (Hebrews 10:26) is equivalent to trampling the Son of God under foot and treating the blood of Jesus which sanctified you as an unholy thing and insulting the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).

### **2.5.3 False Prophets Dishearten the Righteous While Encouraging Wickedness.**

When God described this characteristic of false prophets he especially had the prophetess' of the land in mind: "Set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own imagination" (Ezekiel 13:17). They had sewn magic charms on their hands and made veils of various lengths for their heads to ensnare people (Ezekiel 13:18).

*God's complaint against them was that they disheartened the righteous with their lies when He had brought them no grief.* He also had this against them: They did not encourage the wicked to turn away from their evil ways and thus save their lives (Ezekiel 13:22).

Contrast with God's Word: Disheartening God's servants is a cruel joke that false prophets delight in (for example, a prophetess named Noadiah and other prophets tried to intimidate Nehemiah, who was God's servant, by prophesying against him; Nehemiah 6:12–14). But God says that He will set free the people that such false prophetess' have ensnared like birds (Ezekiel 13: 20,21).

Earlier, Jeremiah had recorded a related aspect of false prophets. The Lord pointed out that prophets had become godless and even in His temple He found their wickedness (Jeremiah 23:11). They strengthened the hands of evildoers so that no one of them turned from their wickedness (Jeremiah 23:14b). And because of these prophets ungodliness had spread throughout the land ((Jeremiah 23:15b).

## **2.6 Five Ways to Recognize False Prophets**

### **2.6.1 Their Appearance.**

*Jesus warned: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” (Matthew 7:15).* Paul also warned about them: “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve” (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

So, the warning is not to be deceived by the innocent looking appearances of false prophets.

### **2.6.2 Their Approach.**

Jesus warned, “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1).

This warning is important. It is commonly seen that members of cult groups gain an entrance to your home and heart by introducing themselves as belonging to some reputed Church or Christian organization. They do this to gain an entrance. Once you allow them in, they start talking about their group’s teaching. They distort the Scriptures too. The Bible says that these *false prophets will secretly introduce destructive heresies* (2 Peter 2:1). Please note that they will do so secretly; and not in a straightforward manner. *They will also distort the truth to draw away disciples after them* (Acts 20:30).

John wrote not to take such people into your homes or welcome them. Anyone who does so, he says, shares in his wicked work (2 John 10,11).

### **2.6.3 Their Fruit (Character).**

*Jesus has given us a practical method of knowing false prophets. He told us that performing miracles, signs and wonders is not the real sign of godliness but doing the will of God is (Matthew 7:21–23). Refer also Revelation 16:13,14, where a time possibly near to the second coming of Jesus is mentioned (see verse 15). Here it is clearly pointed out that miraculous signs can be performed by spirits of demons too. Remember that the Egyptian magicians were also able to do some things by their secret arts (Exodus 7:11, 22; 8:7). But then a time came when it was beyond them to imitate God’s work (Exodus 8:18,19).*

*The real test of a godly person is not his ability to do miracles but his fruit or character. As Jesus said, “By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:16a, 20).*

Paul put love ahead of speaking in tongues, prophesying, faith to move mountains, giving to the poor etc (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). He said that without love a person is nothing.

The Bible describes the character of false prophets as “arrogant; treacherous men” (Zephaniah 3:4a).

#### **2.6.4 Their Speech.**

The ultimate false prophet who is to come as the helper of the Antichrist (who himself is Satan's authorized representative ruler) is described as having two horns like a lamb, but speaking like a dragon (Revelation 13:11). In Revelation 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10, he is identified as the false prophet. Even the lesser false prophets of today behave in this manner. Their appearance is like lambs but their speech is knife-like.

Again, the Bible warns that these men are grumblers and faultfinders. It adds that they boast about themselves and also flatter others for their own advantage (Jude 16). Peter also records that they mouth empty boastful words (2 Peter 2:18). If you observe the false prophets you will find that they have a strong habit of boasting and flattering others.

Another clue about the nature of these false prophets is the way they slander celestial beings. They tend to talk directly at Satan and demons. But is this Biblical? No! Peter says: "Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand" (2 Peter 2:10b–12a). Read also Jude 8–10.

The practical reality is that in their obsession they talk more about Satan, glorifying him, rather than the Lord in their ministry.

#### **2.6.5 Their Teaching About Jesus Christ.**

John wrote: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world" (1 John 4:1–3).

When you have doubts whether someone is a false prophet or not, you apply this test to their teachings. If they try to compromise on the virgin birth, sinless life, and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross by shedding His precious blood; then they do not have the Spirit of God.

### **2.7 More Citations**

#### **2.7.1 The Delusion**

(Based on 2 Thessalonians 2: 1–12 NIV).

Delusion refers to the act of believing or making yourself believe something that is not true. The Bible speaks of God sending a powerful delusion! Why would God do such a thing? Because of the attitude of people.

The Bible says that the "secret power of lawlessness is already at work" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Since this is already at work, we should be watchful against it. And why is it at work even now? To prepare the stage for the arrival of the Antichrist who is the Man of Lawlessness.

This is how the stage for his arrival will be set: “The coming of the lawlessness one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing.” See that these kind of miracles, signs and wonders are COUNTERFEIT. That means it is made to look like original. Its purpose is to deceive. It is not genuine. Watch out when you see such things because the stage is being set for the arrival of the Antichrist.

Again, it is written, “They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” Be careful not to neglect the Bible which is the truth or else you will perish. Because it is by knowing the truth you are set free (John 8:32).

“For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” Be warned!

### **2.7.2 Animal-like Behavior**

God created man and woman in His own image. And He made them rulers over all animals. But man tried to reduce God and take away from His glory by making images of Him which looked like man, then birds, then animals and finally reptiles (see Romans 1:21-23).

This is clearly against God. In modern days, in the name of God, these kind of practices have found its way into religious meetings too in a different form—Animal-like behavior. You find people walking on all fours in religious meetings. It is clear that this behavior is from the devil and demonic spirits. For in the Bible we find God judging Nebuchadnezzar by sentencing him to live with wild animals eating grass like cattle for seven years (see Daniel 4). That means animal-like behavior is a judgment and not a Christian experience.

About moving around like a snake on the ground; no explanation is needed. The serpent is clearly identified in the Bible as the devil or Satan (see Revelation 20:2). So can such an experience be Biblical?

Again convulsions, rolling on the ground, foaming at the mouth have been clearly associated with demonic activity (see Mark 9:20). Also screaming (see Luke 9:39), living in the tombs (see Mark 5:2,3), not wearing clothes (see Luke 8:27). In many cults today, removal of clothing is part of their ceremonies. It is clearly demonic.

### **2.7.3 Holy Laughter**

The Bible at least in one instance points out how God uses laughter as an instrument of His judgment. Jeremiah 51:39 says this about God’s judgment of Babylon: “But while they are aroused, I will set out a feast for them and make them drunk, so that they shout with laughter—then sleep forever and not awake,” declares the Lord.

So shouting with laughter, as happens in many modern religious meetings, is clearly a sign that

judgment will come soon.

#### **2.7.4 Religious Business**

In the name of preaching the Gospel, many false prophets of the day are conducting their own business to make money.

1. Simon the Sorcerer tried to buy the gift of God for money. But Peter called his idea wickedness (see Acts 8:18–22). What Peter and John refused to do; today's false prophets are doing. They are promising God's gift of the Holy Spirit for money! Financial blessings, health and healing and other things are promised along with.

2. Why did Jesus drive out people from the temple? Because they had made it a den of robbers (Mark 11:15–17). They were doing religious-business. What do you find happening in today's religious shows? 3. When Naaman was healed of his leprosy, Elisha refused to accept any gift from him (see 2 Kings 5:16). But Gehazi his servant went after Naaman without Elisha's permission and got some gifts. When he came back, Elisha asked him: "Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds, or menservants or maidservants?" (v.26b). And Gehazi got the leprosy instead.

Think about the influence of money in today's religious world. Did not Jesus clearly say: You cannot serve both God and Money!

#### **2.7.5 Slaying in the Spirit**

<http://www.lovesark.net/biblenyou/slayinginthespirit.html>

#### **2.7.6 Making of the Ark of the Covenant**

Many evangelists today are making models of the Ark of the Covenant. They manipulate people by saying that their prayer requests if laid on the models of the Ark they have made would be specially remembered by God. Some others have gone to the extent of engraving the names of big money donors on the same. This is to fool you!

Look at the following:

God said in Jeremiah, "Men will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.' It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made" (Jeremiah 3:16b NIV). Are these evangelists greater than God and His Word? How can they dare to violate what God has said so specifically? Do you think that they have not read this Scripture? No. They have read these Scriptures many times. Then why do they make an Ark? To fool you, of course, to get your money!

Again, the Ark pointed to Jesus Christ shedding His precious blood. The Bible says that Christ is the end of the law (see Romans 10:4). That means all what the Old Testament pointed to have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Book of Hebrews tells us that the articles in the tabernacle including the ark was made according to the pattern shown to Moses (8:5) (Read

also Revelation 11:19, Hebrews 9:23), but Jesus' ministry is superior (8:6; 9:11,12) as the law was only a shadow of things that were to come (10:1). So Jesus fulfilled the requirement of the law by shedding His blood [Read Hebrews 9 and 10:1–4 for full understanding]. Therefore the Ark of the Covenant is no longer needed.

Finally, if you look at 1 Samuel 4, you find the Ark of the Covenant captured by Philistine forces. That means that God withdraws His visible presence from His people if they disobey Him. (The same thing happened with the Jerusalem temple which was destroyed.) And today nobody knows whether the Ark of the Covenant has been destroyed or preserved? But since Christ came and fulfilled whatever it was pointing to, it is no longer needed.

So the false prophets of the day are fooling God's people by bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to human minds.

### **3 The Role of People in Creating and Supporting False Prophets**

The simple fact is that people have a big role in the success of false prophets. The Bible identifies some attitudes of people that contribute to the success of false prophets. You will be wise to be warned about them.

#### **3.1 When People Love to Listen to Lies There Is Danger.**

“My people love it this way” (Jeremiah 5:31b). When people listen to the lies of prophets whom God has not sent; and who yet prophesy in God's name, then there is danger. “Therefore, I will banish you and you will perish, both you and the prophets who prophesy to you” (Jeremiah 27:15b). Ezekiel 13:19 also mentions about God's people “who listen to lies.”

#### **3.2 When People Keep Seeking Prophets Instead of the Lord There Is Danger.**

When people keep saying to a false prophet, “What is the Lord's answer to you? or “What has the Lord spoken?” (Jeremiah 23:37) then there is danger. It encourages the false prophets to say their own words by claiming it as “The oracle of the Lord.” Then God says: “Therefore, I will surely forget you and cast you out of my presence ... I will bring upon you everlasting disgrace—everlasting shame that will not be forgotten” (Jeremiah 23:39,40).

#### **3.3 When People Encourage False Prophets To Have Dreams, Then There Is Danger.**

“ ‘Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,’ declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 29:8,9).

### **3.4 When People Close Their Ears to the Truth There Is Danger.**

When people oppose the real prophets of the Lord, then there is danger. God describes such people as rebellious, deceitful and children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction (Isaiah 30:9). "They say to the seers, 'See no more visions!' and to the prophets, 'Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!' " (Isaiah 30:10,11). Such attitude of the people cause the rise and growth of false prophets who will prophesy for them illusions of their own creation and imagination.

Paul also warned about this: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3,4). This attitude of people to hear what they want to hear and not the truth will create success for false prophets. You already might be seeing this happening right in front of your eyes.

### **3.5 When People Entertain Friendship with the World Then There Is Danger.**

The Bible points out that false prophets entice people, "by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature" and thus "they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error" (2 Peter 2:18).

The main thing to remember here is that modern day false prophets appeal to the pride of possessing material things. Of course, they quote Bible verses out of context to prove their point too. But the Bible says, "For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:16). It is very clear from this passage that the lustful desires of sinful human nature strikes a friendship with the world. But the Bible warns, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Again, James 4:4 says, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." So be warned. Your choice to be a friend of the world brings enmity between you and God!

### **3.6 When People Try To Put Their Legs in Two Boats at once There Is Danger.**

When people put up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces and try to inquire of God (Ezekiel 14:3,4), then there is danger. God warns that both prophet and the one who consulted him will perish in such a context (Read Ezekiel 14:1–11 for better understanding).



## 4 Conclusion

*The Bible says that our God is One “who foils the signs of false prophets” but “carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers” (Isaiah 44:25,26). In this context it is good to note that “a prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true” (Jeremiah 28:9).*

### 4.1 Punishment for False Prophets

Another thing to note is that God has reserved punishment<sup>1</sup> for all false prophets.

*Some false prophets, nevertheless, may seem to prosper for some time. Possibly, God is using them to test His people (Deuteronomy 13:3) or God is giving the false prophet time to repent (Revelation 2:21). But again, punishment is foretold (Revelation 2:22,23), if they refuse to repent.*

### 4.2 The Ultimate False Prophet

The ultimate false prophet who is to come as the right-hand man of the Antichrist will speak like a dragon though he has two horns like that of a lamb. He will perform great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. By such means he deceives the people. He causes them to worship the Antichrist by giving breath to his image. He will introduce a mark on the right hand or forehead without which no one can buy or sell. That mark is the name of Antichrist or the number of his name (666) (Revelation 13:11–18).

The point is that through smooth speech, miraculous signs, worship of the devil and control of trade; this false prophet would cause havoc in the world and turn people against God. Even today, his forerunners, deceive many by their smooth tongue, their show of miraculous signs and promise to give them prosperity. Watch out for such people.

### 4.3 Did You Know This?

The Lord pointed out that false prophets who leads God’s people astray have one characteristic in common: If one feeds them, they proclaim “peace” to that person. In modern terms, the false prophets pronounce truck-loads of blessing on him. But if the prophets are not fed, that is, if

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<sup>1</sup>Deuteronomy 13:5; Jeremiah 14:15, 20:6 (Pashhur, a historical example, punished for prophesying lies), 23:12,15, 28:15–17 (Hananiah, another historical example, punished for making the nation trust in lies and preaching rebellion against the Lord), 29:21–23 (Ahab and Zedekiah, yet another historical example, punished for prophesying lies in God’s name and committing adultery with neighbor’s wives); Lamentations 4:13 says that Jerusalem was destroyed as a direct consequence of “the sins of her prophets”; in Ezekiel 13:9 the Lord declares: “My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations”; in Micah 3:6, the Lord says, “The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them”; and Zechariah 13:3. All the above passages point out that God will punish the false prophets.

they are not taken care of, they prepare to wage war against him (Micah 3:5). Again God points out that prophets tell fortunes for money (Micah 3:11).

Watch out for such false prophets for God has already warned you through His Word. *And do not be overwhelmed by their popularity for Jesus said: “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).* So, popularity of a prophet does not necessarily mean he is a servant of the Lord.

In contrast to the false prophets, the true prophets of the Lord were hated, excluded, insulted and rejected (Luke 6:22,23). The Bible also says: “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:12,13).

#### **4.4 Final Warning**

One of the greatest tragedies of modern days is the arrival of countless number of doomsday prophets. Many people follow them expecting the world to end and Christ to come. These people not only lose their faith but sometimes their lives as well in tragic circumstances. All this happens because people have failed to heed the warning of Jesus Himself. He said that false Christs and false prophets will appear. They will perform great signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible. Jesus said that He was telling all this ahead of time so that you may not believe the lies of people who claim that Christ is there out in the desert or here in the inner room (Matthew 24:11, 23–26, Mark 13:22).

As a final word, Jesus gave a clear indication as to how He will appear, and you will be wise to heed that warning:

For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:27).

#### **4.5 Important Chapters and Scripture Portions**

- Jeremiah 23:9–40
- Ezekiel 13, 14:1–11
- Matthew 7:15–23
- 2 Peter 2
- Jude 3–16
- Revelation 13:11–18

## 5 Appendix I

### 5.1 Characteristics of the True Prophets of the Lord

#### 5.1.1 They were called and commissioned by God.

Examples: Moses (Exodus 3:10), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:3), Amos (Amos 7:14,15).

#### 5.1.2 They spoke the truth in God's name.

These prophets had prophetic authority because they could truthfully and boldly say: "The Lord God Almighty says" or "declares the Lord." Even a casual reader of the Old Testament will not miss the frequent repetition of these phrases or its importance.

For example, Prophet Micaiah did not fear to speak the truth even when 400 false prophets were uttering lies. Even the messenger who went to get Micaiah told him to prophesy success to the king. But he chose to speak the truth. You will find this story in 2 Chronicles 18.

#### 5.1.3 Most of the true prophets did not have confidence in their own ability. But God equipped them to do His work.

Moses (Exodus 3:11, 4:10–17), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5,6), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:6–10), Daniel (Daniel 2:18, 30) are examples.

#### 5.1.4 They confronted the powerful kings of their day and declared to them their sin and coming judgment. They did so without fear or favor.

Nathan to David (2 Samuel 12:7–14), Samuel to Saul (1 Samuel 15:22,23), Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:27) and to Belshazzar (Daniel 5:22–28), a man of God from Judah to Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:1–3), Ahijah to Jeroboam's wife when she was sent in disguise to the prophet (1 Kings 14:6–16) are examples. *Read Micah 3:8 to know the secret of the boldness of these prophets.*

How many prophets speak against the sin of rulers and powerful men these days?

#### 5.1.5 Some of them were given the ability to perform miracles while most of them had the sole and greater burden of speaking God's word faithfully.

Examples of miracle-working prophets: Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10–12), Samuel (1 Samuel 12:16–18), Elijah (1 Kings 18:36–38 and 2 Kings 2:8) and Elisha (2 Kings 2:14, 19–22, 4:38–41).

### **5.1.6 They had intimate knowledge of the Scriptures**

Peter wrote that these prophets “searched intently and with greatest care” things regarding salvation.

Daniel (Daniel 9:2) is an example of him getting to know God’s will and plan from the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah himself spoke about God’s words (Jeremiah 15:16); and Ezekiel too (Ezekiel 2:8–3:4).

### **5.1.7 They had moments of doubt and discouragement and even arguments with God.**

Samuel (1 Samuel 15:11, 35; 16:1), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Jeremiah (8:21,22, 12:1,2, 14:8,9, 20:7–9), Jonah 4, Habakkuk 1:13 and John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2) are examples.

- Emerging Strong from Discouragement: <http://www.lovesark.net/jubilee/walkofvictory/index.php/6>
- Loved And Accepted Even When You Doubt: <http://www.lovesark.net/jubilee/walkofvictory/index.php/6>
- The Prayer of Discouragement: <http://www.lovesark.net/prayer/pathways/chapters/chapter044.html>

### **5.1.8 They were not given divine knowledge all the time.**

Elisha (2 Kings 4:27) and Daniel (Daniel 12:8–10) are classic examples. Today’s prophets claim great supernatural knowledge all the time. Read Colossians 2:18,19 to be warned about such people.

### **5.1.9 They were men of prayer.**

Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Habakkuk are all examples of prophets who prayed.

### **5.1.10 They always obeyed God.**

Prophet Jonah is an exception. His obedience is an example of delayed obedience.

### **5.1.11 Their message had a balance between God’s judgment and God’s comfort.**

This balance is glaringly absent in the preaching of today’s false prophets. They speak only about God’s blessings; material prosperity, healing, and financial blessing. But if you read the Prophets you will see them declare God’s coming judgment. They declared to the people their sin and its fearful consequences that were yet to come. But they also presented to the people the comfort and hope from God available to them if they repented of their sins and turned to God (Jeremiah 35:15). In one word, repentance was their key message!

### **5.1.12 They were signs and symbols in Israel. Most of them suffered much.**

Isaiah (Isaiah 8:18; 20:3), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 27:2; 26:7–11, 38:1–13), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4; 12:1–11), Ezekiel's wife dies (Ezekiel 24:15–27) are examples. In this context, it is good to remember the sufferings and hardships of Apostle Paul who went on missionary journeys to preach the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:23–29). Read more about the sufferings of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:35b–38.

The point is that if you realistically look at the difficulties they had to face in life, no one would put himself forward to become a prophet of the Lord. They were enabled to continue as prophets of the Lord because God called them, equipped them and encouraged them to keep going. In simple words, they carried their cross!

### **5.1.13 Jesus testified that the prophets wrote about Him.**

Matthew 26:54, 56,; Luke 24:25–27, 44–49, and John 3:14, 5:39,40

Even Paul said: "I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22b,23). Oh, if today's prophets would preach the cross and confine themselves to what the Bible teaches alone instead of teaching their own ideas, the world would find Jesus!

## **6 Appendix II**

### **6.1 When Leaders Disappoint**

The Christian world is full of leaders, both big and small. With media explosion many of them have a kind of demigod status. They do not exhibit the spirit of John the Baptist who said that he should decrease while Jesus should increase. Instead they enjoy all the praise showered on them. This kind of attention often borders on the line of worship. But these leaders do not ask their followers to stop adoring them.

And then comes a time when something that they do disappoint us. It need not be sin in particular. But it could be a wrong decision, a wrong teaching or even a wrong attitude. Even to a little child it is obvious that it is wrong. But these leaders don't seem to realize. They keep advertising and keep moving ahead. It seems as if they do not care whether what they do is God's will or not. What matters to them is popularity of their ministry and building of their own kingdom on earth.

Why does such things happen in the life of leaders? There are many reasons. We shall see two of them.

### **6.1.1 Lack of Humility**

If our leaders would take time to reflect on that one thing that characterized Jesus' entire life they would do better. That one characteristic was humility. He humbled himself in his birth and in his death. His life was one of simplicity and walking with the common folk.

When leaders lose this humility they fail to reflect Jesus.

### **6.1.2 Lack of Approachability**

There was a time when Jesus had to rebuke His disciples who tried to prevent the little children from coming to Him. Jesus was approachable at all times. Sometimes He never could rest or eat or sleep properly. Before He could do so people came in search of Him. Even when the crowds pressed around Him, He could distinguish that needy touch. He would stop to find out who touched Him.

When leaders lose this approachability they lose the sense of reality. They live in luxury; sometimes in big mansions away from people and start to project themselves instead of Jesus.

## **6.2 Safety Measures for Believers**

### **6.2.1 Do Not Seek Signs**

Jesus never favored a display of His power to entertain the crowd with signs. All His miracles were given with a purpose. That purpose could be said to be "to glorify God" (John 17:4). Also, He was filled with compassion for people when He did miracles.

### **6.2.2 Look to Jesus**

People will disappoint you once in a while. That disappointment is more when you had look to them for spiritual help and encouragement. When it happens, most find that it shatters their faith. But the truth is that you are asked to look to Jesus (Hebrews 12:2).

Look to Jesus!

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