

Deadly Deceptions

Matthew 7:15-20

Whose voice will you listen too?



Men or women who falsely claim to speak on God's behalf. They are denounced in the OT and NT for leading people astray. Scripture provides criteria by which true prophets may be recognized and distinguished from false prophets, who often speak from base motives.

If you run in Christian circles you will soon find an unprecedented number of ministers touting the title of "Prophet". What's wrong with that you may ask, after all doesn't the bible say...

"¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.¹

Yes it does - but the bible in no uncertain terms also warns us of the rise of false prophets and the destruction they bring.

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits."²

¹ [The New King James Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ac 2:17-18.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 7:15-20.

Q. Some believe that there no more Prophets today, others say that Prophecy today is simply Preaching the word. What does the scripture say?

- Prophetic utterances of John's father Zechariah, and of Anna, Simeon and Mary at the beginning of Luke's Gospel all bear witness to the continuance of prophetic inspiration (Lk. 1:46–55, 67–79; 2:26–38). The
- NT stands in a relation of fulfilment to the actual message of the OT prophets. Time and again this is the burden of the NT: what God said of old he has now brought to pass (*e.g.* Mt. 1:22; 13:17; 26:56; Lk. 1:70; 18:31; Acts 3:21; 10:43, *etc.*). They all bore witness ultimately to Christ and his saving work (Lk. 24:25, 27, 44; Jn. 1:45; 5:39; 11:51). He came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them (Mt. 5:17),
- Their basic concept of a prophet was clearly based upon the OT prophetic ministry, and included declaring God's word, having supernormal knowledge, and evidencing the power of God (*cf.* Jn. 3:2; 4:19 *in loc.*; Mt. 26:68; Lk. 7:39).
- The apostles came to realize that the ultimate fulfilment of Moses' prophecy (Dt. 18:15ff.) of the prophet like him whom God would raise up was found in Christ himself (Acts 3:22–26; 7:37; *MESSIAH
- prophecy is repeatedly mentioned as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit with which Christ equips his members to function as his body in each place (Rom. 12:4–7; 1 Cor. 12:10–13; 1 Thes. 5:19–20; 1 Pet. 4:10–11;
- It was doubtless just such abuses which led the apostle to write to another young church, 'Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good' (1 Thes. 5:19–21)
- The spiritual gifts remain in effect until Christ returns, that is when there will be no need of them.
 - ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.³

³ [The New King James Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 1 Co 13:9–10.

God initiates the call of a Prophet – there are no self-appointed Prophets.

He received a specific and personal call from God. The initiative in making a prophet rests with God (Ex. 3:1–4:17; *cf.* Is. 6; Je. 1:4–19; Ezk. 1–3; Ho. 1:2; Am. 7:14–15; Jon. 1:1), and it is only the false prophet who dares to take the office upon himself (Je. 14:14; 23:21).⁴

Q. Why is the identification of false Prophets important? How do they Present themselves? What are they really like?

Matthew 7:15

“**Beware** of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Q. How does the increasing frequency and rise of false Prophets affect many of us? What is the final outcome?

Matthew 24:11

And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

Q. Why are so many deceived?

Mark 13:22

For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

Those 3 verses alone should give you serious pause – the scripture goes on to say

⁴ J. W. L. Hoad, “[Promise,](#)” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 964.

1 John 4:1–3

*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. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.*

Undoubtedly, many of you listen to and follow those who the bible would class as false prophets and false teachers. And, undoubtedly some of you have been genuinely blessed by some of their preaching, and undoubtedly that causes serious cognitive dissonance and often leads us to deny the truth and believe a lie. For sure it would not be good to wrongly accuse someone of being a false prophet, but it is probably even more detrimental to those who follow them who are.

The words of a false prophet are so seductive, that if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived – so what are the characteristics that expose and betray the false prophet?

You can't always tell a false Prophet by what they say

In Number 22 Balaam was a seer (prophet) feared for his pronouncements. He was hired to curse Israel but God wouldn't allow it, Balaam could only say what God told him. Numbers 22-24. Balaam was a false prophet - Deut 23:4-5, Josh 13:22, 2 Pet 2:15-16, Jude 11, Rev 2:14

¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ⁵

⁵ [The New King James Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Re 2:14.

The Pursuit of money

¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. ¹⁸ What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.⁶

(What other scripture speaks of this)

Preaching Another Gospel

⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.⁷

Their True Motivation

¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: ¹⁶ The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

What else does the scripture say that would help us identify false prophets and teachers...

⁶ [The New King James Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 1 Co 9:16–18.

⁷ [The New King James Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ga 1:6–9.

⁸ [The New King James Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Php 1:15–19.

The motivations of false Prophets

Their messages originate with themselves Jer 23:16 *See also Jer 14:13-14; 23:25-32,36; Eze 13:1-7*

Their messages may be occasioned by popular demand Jer 29:8-9

God places a strict requirement upon his prophets that they should proclaim only what is divinely revealed: Nu 22:35,38; 23:12,26; 24:12-13; 1Ki 22:13-14

Isa 30:10-11; Jer 5:30-31; Mic 2:11

Their messages may be given for financial reward Ne 6:12-13 *See also Jer 6:13-14; Eze 13:19; Mic 3:11; 2Pe 2:1-3*

Their messages may be the result of deception 1Ki 22:19-23 pp 2Ch 18:18-22 *See also Eze 14:9*

Their messages may be inspired by divination Jer 14:14 *See also Eze 13:6-7; 22:28; Ac 13:6*

Examples of false prophets

In the OT Ne 6:10-13 *See also 1Ki 22:1-28 pp 2Ch 18:1-27; Jer 27:9-10,14-18*

False prophetesses Ne 6:14; Eze 13:17

Prophets of other gods Jer 23:13 *See also 1Ki 18:19-40; 2Ki 10:19; Jer 2:8*

In the NT Mt 24:24 pp Mk 13:22 *See also Mt 24:10-11; Ac 13:6-11*

False prophets feature as part of the symbolism of the book of Revelation: Rev 2:20; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10

The True Prophet of God

Criteria for recognizing true prophets

A true prophet's word will be fulfilled Dt 18:21-22 *See also Jer 28:8-9*

A true prophet's teaching commends righteous behavior Dt 13:1-4 *See also Eze 13:17-23; 14:4-8; La 2:14*

A true prophet's godly life will reflect his calling Mt 7:15-20 *See also Isa 28:7; Jer 23:10-11,14; Zep 3:4*

A true prophet will acknowledge Jesus Christ as divine 1Jn 4:1-6