

THE TESTS OF A PROPHET

Text: 2 Peter 2:1

INTRO: Under the Law of Moses, the sin of being a false prophet carried the death penalty, Deut. 18:20, though that penalty was rarely if ever carried out, especially in Israel's later years. Since God's people were instructed to test the prophets and reject those who were fakes, it was necessary for God to give some guidelines that would help to distinguish the false from the true. Since there are many false teachers & some fake prophets in the world even today, it will be fruitful for us to take note of the tests a prophet must pass to be approved by God & by His faithful people.

I. DO ALL HIS PREDICTIONS COME TRUE?

Deut 18:20-22, But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' "And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'--when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

- A. There were many false prophets during Israel's history. They cried out "Peace, Peace" when there was no peace, Jer. 8:11.
- B. In more recent times, false prophets such as Joseph Smith have deceived millions. According to "Doctrines And Covenants, Joseph Smith received a revelation in Jackson County, Missouri, July 20, 1831 that stated: "Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed & consecrated for the gathering of the saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, & the place for the city of Zion. And thus said the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center

place; & a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse” (D&C 57:1-3). On Sept. 22, 23, 1832, Smith received another “revelation,” that the “temple shall be reared in this generation” – that is the generation alive in 1832. 170 years have passed. Independence, MO is still not Zion, and no temple has been built there. Smith was a false prophet.

C. Many religious leaders today would not describe themselves as prophets, but they basically claim to receive special messages from God to pass on to others – exactly the work that prophets did in the days of prophetic revelations. One preacher I listened to when I was growing up said that God had revealed to him that Jesus would return in his lifetime. He died in an auto accident in Houston, TX several years ago. God had NOT told him what he thought God had said to him.

II. DOES HE LEAD HIS LISTENERS TO WORSHIP OTHER GODS?

Deut 13:1-5, "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, & he gives you a sign or a wonder, & the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'-- which you have not known--'and let us serve them,' "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him & hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt & redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God

commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

- A. Obviously, there were numerous such “prophets” in Israel during the time of the divided kingdom & even earlier. Pharaoh’s magicians, EX 7:22.
- B. Simon the sorcerer had practiced such in N.T. times, Acts 8:9-10.
- C. The “man of sin” foretold in 2 Thess. 2:9.
- D. Today, there are religious leaders who would claim to be a part of what they call “Christiandom” who water down their brand of Christianity to the point of encouraging people of virtually all religious movements & practices & seek to promote “the best of all religions.”

III. DOES HE TEACH ANYTHING THAT CONTRADICTS WHAT GOD HAS PREVIOUSLY REVEALED?

Isa 8:19-20, And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

- A. The “old prophet” of Bethel, 1 Kings 13:18.
- B. Mohammed taught that Jesus was a prophet, but that He was not the Son of God. He taught that God’s chosen came through Ishmael, not through Isaac.
- C. Joseph Smith wrote that Jesus would be born in Jerusalem. B.M. Alma 7:10. He claimed the church of Christ existed in 147 B.C., Mosiah 18:17, as opposed to MT 16:18. He said there was darkness for 3 days when Christ died. The N.T. says the darkness was for 3 hours. Such false teachings can be multiplied many times over.

D. Modern prognosticators fail miserably in this matter. It is usually not necessary to wait & see if their predictions become true. Their teachings are almost always connected with obviously false doctrine.

IV. DOES HIS LIFESTYLE HARMONIZE WITH HIS TEACHINGS.

2 Peter 1:20-21, No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

A. God occasionally used ungodly men to make some truth known. Once, He even used a donkey. But He never sent such out to preach. He never guided them to write Scripture. All the true prophets were “holy men of God.”

B. This, of course, is not to say the prophets were sinless. Their lives sometimes showed reluctance to fill their office, or some degree of weakness. But God never called to the prophetic ministry anyone who was unwilling to apply in his life the things he preached in his prophetic ministry.

NOTE: The word “holy” is not found in the oldest MS from which most modern translations are derived—but it is in the vast majority of the Gr. MS, & it is in the Latin & Aramaic versions, which are both older than any Gr. MS yet discovered.

CONCLUSION: Even today vast multitudes are following the teachings of false prophets & false teachers. Islam, founded on the false teachings of Mohammed is one of the fastest growing religions in the world. Millions of adherents have followed the false teachings of Joseph Smith. Millions more have been deceived or self-deceived by preachers, teachers, & others, who sincerely believe God is speaking to them in various ways apart from the revelation of Himself in the N.T. Scriptures. Paul warns,

Gal 1:6-9, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. 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.

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