

PROPHETS.....TRUE AND FALSE



PROPHET: an inspired messenger who declares the will of God

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROPHET

1. They warned people of evil ways and the right way to go
Zechariah 1:4-6 2 Kings 17:13 Ezekiel 33:11
Jeremiah 18
2. They are God's messengers
2 Chronicles 36:15 – sent word to them through His messengers
2 Peter 1:21 – no prophecy because man willed it
3. They are a “watchman”
Ezekiel 3:17
watchman: is a sentinel; a guard – that is their job
often they were the first to see trouble coming
4. Prophets were a part of helping to build the House of God: Ezra 5:1,2
The strong appeals and animating exhortations of these prophets gave a new impulse to the building of the temple. They not only preached but got involved in the labor.
5. God appoints prophetic voices to help us with our work:
Ephesians 4:11-13
His intention: perfecting and equipping of the saints.
Those today who are true prophets should have the same effect upon us as Haggai's and Zechariah's had on Israel.
6. A true prophet is filled with the Spirit and power. Micah 3:8
Micah spoke with authority, denouncing the people's sin and predicting judgment.

LOOKING AT THE PROPHETIC WORD..CHARACTERISTICS ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD

Luke 24:27: Jesus interpreted to His disciples all that the prophets in the Old Testament said concerning Himself.

He is always the central thread of any prophetic word.

Perhaps their notions (disciples) about the Messiah were not what they should be so **from Scripture He reveals the truth.**

Verse 44: Everything stated in the Law and prophets and Psalms must be fulfilled.

Jesus' pattern for looking at the prophetic should be a pattern and example for our own lives.

THE MESSAGE OF ALL THE TRUE PROPHETS WERE UNITED IN TESTIMONY.

Acts 3:21,24 – They all pointed to a future Messiah

A TRUE PROPHETIC WORD DOES NOT COME ABOUT BECAUSE A MAN WILLS IT.

2 Peter 1:21 – It is God's Spirit Who directs them.

Those who speak out of their own wills are false prophets (see Jeremiah 23:26).

THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS WORD MAY BE UNCONDITIONAL

In Ezekiel, he delivers a series of 5 messages:

1. Ezekiel 12:21-25
2. Ezekiel 12:26-28
3. Ezekiel 13
4. Ezekiel 14:1-11
5. Ezekiel 14:12-23

All of the above had to do with destroying the people's false optimism and to show the certainty of judgment.

#1 Message: Ezekiel 12:21-25

Re: a proverb the people were quoting - "The days go by and every vision comes to nothing." They quoted and believed this because their thinking that Ezekiel's and other prophet's predictions of doom would not take place. They labeled them as doomsayers. God said He was going to keep the people from quoting this any longer. The people's smug assurance would end when the judgments arrived. False prophets had been contradicting the claims of God's true messengers in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 28:1-4) and Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1,8-9). Their optimistic predictions would cease as God hastened to fulfill His Word. He would remove false visions and flattering divinations.

#2 Message: Ezekiel 12:26-28

Even though the Israelites believed Ezekiel was a true prophet, they doubted the soon fulfillment of his word: "he prophesies about the distant future." Their attitude: "If God does act, it will not be soon." Peter predicted the same attitude about the return of Christ (2 Peter 3:3-10).

God's delay is a sign of mercy, not uncertainty. The second proverb like the first was giving false hope to a nation that needed clear understanding of its dire condition.

SOMETIMES HIS WORD MAY BE CONDITIONAL

Jonah 3:1-10: Jonah was to go to the Ninevites. They were to repent of their evil ways. The message was to repent or destruction would come in 40 days. The people believed. They fasted and put on sackcloth. God saw their actions and that they had turned from their evil ways. He relented from the disaster. He threatened to do and did not do it.

DO NOT SPURN/DEPRECIATE PROPHETIC REVELATIONS

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21: Verse 20: Despise not prophesying: stop counting as nothing.

Prophecy in the apostolic church was directly inspired instruction, exhortation, or warning. We see in these cases that his (the one receiving the word) spirit would receive a spiritual truth in symbol: God through his understanding would interpret it in its application to actual events, and his speech gave the interpretation/the message.

The warning for us comes in verse 21: **TEST ALL THINGS**

To avoid error: other Scriptures speaking of testing are:

1 Corinthians 14:29 (AMP)

²⁹ So let two or three prophets speak [those inspired to preach or teach], while the rest pay attention and weigh and discern what is said. (being devout as Simeon was)

2 Thessalonians 2:2 (AMP)

² Not to allow your minds to be quickly unsettled *or* disturbed or kept excited *or* alarmed, whether it be by some [pretended] revelation of [the] Spirit or by word or by letter [alleged to be] from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has [already] arrived *and* is here.

1 John 4:1-3 (AMP)

¹ BELOVED, DO not put faith in every spirit, but prove (test) the spirits to discover whether they proceed from God; for many false prophets have gone forth into the world.

² By this you may know (perceive and recognize) the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges *and* confesses [the fact] that Jesus Christ (the Messiah) [actually] has become man *and* has come in the flesh is of God [has God for its source];

³ And every spirit which does not acknowledge *and* confess *that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh* [but would annul, destroy, ever, disunite Him] is not of God [does not proceed from Him]. This [nonconfession] is the [spirit] of the antichrist, [of] which you heard that it was coming, and now it is already in the world.

The phrase: “prove all things”: The word used here is one that is properly applicable to metals, by which the true nature and value of the metal is tested (1 Corinthians 3:13): Tested by fire. Carefully examine everything. Don’t receive it on trust; to take it on assertion; to believe it because it was urged with zeal or plausibility. Again: this falls in line with our earlier definition of “devout” in Simeon’s life.

SOMETIMES REVELATIONS CONCERNED FUTURE EVENTS

Acts 11:28 (AMP)

²⁸ And one of them named Agabus stood up and prophesied through the [Holy] Spirit that a great *and* severe famine would come upon the whole world. And this did occur during the reign of Claudius.

However, they more often dealt with the present:

Acts 13:2 (AMP)

² While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate now for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

LOOKING AT FALSE PROPHETS

Other words used for false prophets in the Scriptures:

Soothsayers: fortune tellers

Satan uses them to deceive and distract by even placing the label “prophet” on them so even God’s elect could be deceived. Another way he distorts the things of God.

Diviners: One who pretends to predict events, or to reveal occult things, by the aid of superior beings, or of supernatural means

Scriptural examples:

Deuteronomy 18:14-22

Reliance upon these practices indicated a corresponding failure to trust the Lord with one’s life. Reliance on this could cause one to flee from God’s laws which promote life and blessing.
Verse 15: The Lord would raise up a prophet (Moses)

Acts 13:6: Bar-Jesus – a false prophet – a fortune teller

He pretended to have a divine commission

Verse 8: Elymas: Arabic meaning “the wise” and equivalent to magus (Matthew 2:1)

Verse 10: Won’t you ever stop perverting the straight paths of the Lord?

Joshua 13:22: Balaam – the soothsayer (Numbers 22-23)

Numbers 31:16: By the counsel of Balaam the Israelites were caused to trespass and act treacherously against the Lord in the matter of Peor: A smiting plague came upon the congregation.
Verse 8: Balaam was killed

LOOKING AT FALSE PROPHETS AND EXAMPLES OF THEIR MESSAGES

In Jeremiah’s day, Jeremiah had spoken of doom and the false prophets opposed his message. Therefore, Jeremiah was unpopular because his message showed the people how evil they were. On the other hand, the false prophets had a large enthusiastic audience and were very popular because they made the people believe all was well.

By looking at some of these, we can learn and take heed for even today. We need to look at their character as well as their word...what they believe, how they live, etc.

JEREMIAH 23

Verse 11: Both false prophet and priest are ungodly(godless yet quite religious) and profane – even in God's house.

Verse 16: Do not listen to the words of the false prophets who prophesy to you. They teach you vanity and fill you with vain hopes (they seduce you to vanity, which is idolatry – they delude you with vain promises of security)

Verse 17: They continually speak peace. To those who walk after the stubbornness of their own heart and mind – no evil shall come upon you. Those who promise you safety, without requiring you to forsake your sins and turn to the Lord are false prophets.

Verse 18: Reason why false prophets should not be heeded

They have not stood in the counsels of Jehovah (verse 22)

Only a spiritual man has that privilege (Abraham was an example – Genesis 18:17). Also see Psalm 25:14

Verse 21: God did not send them, yet they ran (went ahead on their own)

Verse 22: If they had really stood in God's council, they would have spoke God's Word and caused the people to turn from their evil ways.

Verse 28: When lies are spoken – do same as when wheat is mixed with chaff – discriminate between the false and true revelations (Psalm 1:4; Hosea 13:3)

Verse 30: God is against prophets who steal from each other and say words are from God.

Verse 32: He is against prophets who prophesy false dreams. They lead people astray who do this.

Verse 33: What is an oracle of the Lord? A burden which the prophet carried or felt which was laid on his heart by the Lord. Often the message was one of judgment. Examples of an oracle/burden being laid on a prophet's hear:

a. Isaiah 13:1: (AMP)

¹ THE MOURNFUL, inspired prediction (a burden to be lifted up) concerning Babylon which Isaiah son of Amoz saw [with prophetic insight]:

b. Isaiah 14:28

c. Nahum 1:1

d. Habakkuk 1:1

Often, the messages were one of judgment:

a. Isaiah 15:1 – Moab

b. Isaiah 17:1 – Damascus

c. Isaiah 19:1 – Egypt

d. Isaiah 21:1 – Desert of the Sea (Babylon)

e. Isaiah 21:11 – Edom

f. Isaiah 21:13 – Arabia

g. Isaiah 22:1 – Valley of Vision

h. Isaiah 23:1 – Tyre

When the people asked: Jeremiah was to say there is none. The oracles had already been given. God would forsake them. He would also punish those who claimed any other oracle. The people were misusing the term so much in claiming divine authority for their own words that God told them not to mention the word again. Its misuse had caused the people to distort the true words of God. Those who continued to claim divine oracles would be judged.

Jeremiah 14:13-16

BEWARE OF CONTRADICTIONS TO GOD'S WORD

Jeremiah is reminding God that false prophets were contradicting His message. Instead of sword and famine, they announced God would give lasting peace to Jerusalem. God's warning:

- a. Jeremiah 5:12-13
- b. Jeremiah 6:13-14
- c. Jeremiah 7:4; 9-10

Living contrary to God's ways. Have other things before God and then come to stand before God to worship. Falsely prophesy. We are set free only to return unchanged.

- d. Jeremiah 27:16: a warning
- e. Jeremiah 28:2-4

Hananiah (a false prophet) He was urging Judah to rebel against Babylon – not to submit (Jeremiah 27:2; 8; 11-12;17)

It was not what God said. We are to submit to God by submitting to those over us. The only time we do not is when they tell us to do something contrary to God's laws/Word.

Hananiah also promise all articles of the Lord's house would be brought back to Judah within 2 years (not what God said: Jeremiah 27:16-22)

God answers Jeremiah: Their messages were lies, delusions of their own minds. God would judge by destroying the false prophets **AND THOSE WHO LISTENED TO THEM** (verse 18).The people believed without having proof of their divine mission. We especially need to heed this warning for God will judge us too if we listen to false prophets.

Micah 3:5-7: Re: Giving false hope and leading them astray

A false, unsuccessful prophet no longer receives communication from God. This is brought about as a result of greed of the prophets who "sell" their deceptive prophecies rather than speaking them freely in response to God's promptings. The commercialization of prophetic speech assures "peace" or prosperity for those who give the prophets "bread". They were saying they would not be punished by God, there would be no calamity.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5:

Attractive leaders are not always led by God. Moses warns the Israelites of false prophets who encourage worship of other gods. New ideas from inspiring people may sound good but we should always judge them by whether or not they are consistent with God's Word. Areas that we should check are:

1. Are they telling the truth? (Based on God's Word)
2. Is their focus on God?
3. Are their words consistent with what you know to be true? Some speak truth while directing you toward God. Others may speak persuasively while directing you towards themselves. A wise person will carefully test ideas against the truth of God's Word.
4. What about their beliefs/lifestyle?

FINALLY:

Guard/protect your hearts

Matthew 10:16-17 (AMP)

¹⁶ Behold, I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves; **be wary and wise as serpents**, and be innocent (harmless, guileless, and without falsity) as doves.

¹⁷ **Be on guard against men [whose way or nature is to act in opposition to God]**; for they will deliver you up to councils and flog you in their synagogues,

2 Peter 3:17 (AMP)

¹⁷ Let me warn you therefore, beloved, that knowing these things beforehand, you should be on your guard, lest you be carried away by the error of lawless *and* wicked [persons and] fall from your own [present] firm condition [your own steadfastness of mind].