

5 Ways to Spot a False Prophet

Some Christians fear that if we accept revelation beyond the Bible, we are open to false prophets. This is a valid concern, but we hope that some examples will help give some context for real versus counterfeit words from God. Here are five key ways to recognize false prophets:

- 1. False prophets are wolves who lie about the future.** Sometimes false prophets prophesy that good times are coming when they are not. God says that false prophets “lead my people astray, saying, ‘Peace,’ when there is no peace” (Ezek. 13:10b, NIV). False prophets only say things people want to hear, ignore personal sin and like to say that everyone is going to heaven. Of false prophets we are told, “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isa. 5:20).
- 2. False prophets prey on people’s fears.** Some people worry about a catastrophic future and are susceptible to scare tactics from wolves disguised as prophets. Sometimes wolves cause people to distrust everyone but them, and they rule out of fear and control. Jesus warns that “many false prophets will rise and will deceive many” (Matt. 24:11, MEV).
- 3. False prophets are often flatterers.** They puff people up with praise, only saying what people want to hear rather than what God wants said. Jesus warns, “Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers spoke of the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). As demonic deception increases in the last days, “the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but they will gather to themselves teachers in accordance with their

own desires, having itching ears and they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

4. **False prophets often work with demonic power that makes them seem like God's anointed.** Counterfeiting the kingdom of God, they lead people astray with clairvoyance, healing, revelations, visions and other demonstrations of unusual supernatural power. But it is all demonic. "For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24).
5. **False prophets are wolves who wear the sheep's clothing until the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, exposes them.** Sometimes these people claim to love Jesus, prophesy at church, cast out demons and see people they anoint with oil healed. But they have no relationship with the Shepherd because they are not among the sheep. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven ... Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonderful works in Your name?' But then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice evil'" (Matt. 7:21a-23).

The primary job of a true prophet is to prepare God's people for the real future. Roughly one-quarter of the Bible was prophetic in nature, revealing the future to God's people. God knows and rules the future, and at times He chooses to reveal it to His people so they can prepare for it. Be open to His prophetic voice, while being alert to counterfeits. {eoa}

This article was adapted from Win Your War: Fight in the Realm You Don't See For Freedom in the One You Do (Oct. 2019) by Mark and Grace Driscoll.

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