

# How to Spot a False Prophet or Teacher

*Editor's Note: This is Part 1 of a two-part article.*

*Author's Note: Dan Juster, Ariel Blumenthal and Asher Intrater contributed to this paper.*

Is someone who prophesies mistakenly a “false prophet”? Is someone who teaches in error a “false teacher”? For instance, we believe strongly in the gifts of the Spirit. If another teacher teaches cessation (the idea that those gifts have ceased), is one of us a false teacher?

We maintain that there is a difference between teaching in error and being a false teacher. A false teacher is teaching false doctrine about Yeshua and leading people away from the true gospel doctrine. It is not merely someone who has made a mistake in his or her theology. If our standard is that we must be 100 percent right all the time in doctrine, then we all are false teachers to some degree—as we have all changed and/or tweaked our doctrinal understanding over the years.

The New Covenant is clear that false teachers and false prophets are not those who merely made a mistake, but are deceivers.

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves (2 Pet. 2:1).

Yeshua gave us a clear warning about the emergence of false prophets in the end times:

And many false prophets will arise and will deceive many. ...

For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:11, 24).

A false prophet in the New Covenant is not a believer who loves Yeshua, preaches the gospel, moves in the power of the Holy Spirit and is a recognized leader of the body of Messiah, and yet happens to make a predictive prophecy that does not come to pass! (That's just one way we might prophecy incorrectly).

This might have happened because they allowed their hopes and emotions to boil over, resulting in a kind of presumption—or for any other number of reasons. Biblically, a false prophet is an *unbeliever* (or former believer!) using demonic inspiration to draw people away from God and faith in Yeshua. The Torah also makes it clear that the primary issue was prophets/teachers whose words would lead the people astray, to abandon their faith and follow after "other gods." (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:9-22)

Under Moses, there were two ways to identify a false prophet.

1. He spoke in the name of other gods.
2. His word did not come to pass.

But in the New Testament Yeshua says, referring to false prophets:

"You will know them by their fruit. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit. But a corrupt tree bears evil fruit. A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree bear good fruit." (Matt. 7:16-18).

So, again, when we speak of false prophets, we are not speaking of believers who preach Yeshua and have long lasting fruit in the kingdom but one time publicly gave a presumptuous

word, but rather we are speaking about cult leaders like David Koresh, Jim Jones or Charles Manson. In most cases, the false prophet claims to be a messiah or the Messiah.

Let's take a closer look at how the Scriptures teach this whole idea of prophecy under the New Covenant versus the Old.

## **New Testament Prophet/Prophecy**

Revelation contains an important statement about the true nature of prophecy since Yeshua's death, resurrection, ascension and outpouring of the Spirit. John sees the return of Yeshua and the wedding supper of the Lamb. An angel rebukes John for seeking to worship him and says:

“See that you not do that. I am your fellow servant, and of your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10).

What does this mean? “For the testimony of Yeshua *is the spirit of prophecy.*”

This is a fundamental difference between Old and New Covenant prophecy: We prophesy to confirm the gospel, the message of His life, the cross, resurrection, ascension, the new birth and indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit to all who believe and the hope of His Second Coming to fully establish the kingdom on earth. We have the full, prophetic revelation of everything God wants men to know in order to be saved.

Before Yeshua fulfilled all of these prophetic acts, the prophets:

...inquired and searched diligently, seeking the events and time the Spirit of Christ, who was within them, signified when He foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (1 Pet. 1:10b-11)

By the Holy Spirit, the best the Old Testament prophets could do was to search for and predict the timing and nature of the events of the coming of the Messiah. But for us, we got it! It's happened, it's been preached, passed down and recorded in Holy Scripture. When we respond to that prophetic message—Yeshua can save you—the Spirit of the Messiah himself causes us to be “born again” from above; and then the Holy Spirit makes His home in us, giving us an “anointing from the Holy One,” which leads us into all truth (1 John 2:20, John 16:13).

This means that New Testament prophecy, and the gift/office of prophet are not what they used to be. We no longer predict the coming of Messiah; we proclaim it and prophetically call all men to embrace it.

## **The Rock Comes Forth**

Just look at Simon Peter (Rock) after Shavuot (Pentecost). Only 10 days earlier, he still didn't understand the gospel (see Acts 1:6-7), but moments after his immersion in the Holy Spirit, he speaks *by the Spirit* mysteries that had been hidden.

He quotes Joel about the outpouring. He quotes prophecies of King David, showing they were referring to the resurrection and the deity of Yeshua. He speaks like a world-class theologian.

He foresaw this and spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see raised up this Jesus, of which we all are witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you now see and hear. (Acts 2:31-33)

Where is the man who is rebuking Yeshua for saying that he was

going to be crucified? Where is the disciple who denied Yeshua three times? Peter is uneducated, but through the spirit of prophecy, he shares the testimony of Yeshua.

In Acts 3, after the healing the crippled man, he speaks of the end times in the most marvelous way.

Therefore repent and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the One who previously was preached to you, Jesus Christ, whom the heavens must receive until the time of restoring what God spoke through all His holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-21).

And before the Sanhedrin he was so intense and overpowering, they said:

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were illiterate and uneducated men, they marveled. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

Please go back and read Acts 2-4 and be amazed at how the Holy Spirit works through the uneducated Peter. {eoa}

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