

# **The Difference Between a False Prophet and a Mistaken Prophet**

A false prophet has no integrity and functions out of self-serving motives, using a supposed prophetic gift for personal gain. A mistaken prophet, on the other hand, has integrity and wants to serve God but mistakes his or her own imaginations and feelings for the Spirit of God. The former needs to be rebuked, while the latter needs to be pastored.

## **I Encountered a False Prophet**

As a young believer in 1972, I passed a small church that I had visited in the past and noticed a large banner stretched across the church yard advertising special revival services. The banner included the name of an evangelist and a caption in large, bold lettering, "God's 20th Century Prophet." Although the boastful, self-promotion in those words should have been a warning sign to me, I was young and naive and could hardly wait to go and hear what "God's 20th Century Prophet" had to say.

I attended the service that night and noted that this individual spent most of his time prophesying to people. He would walk down the aisle and pick people out of the congregation and prophesy to them. His prophecies were not practical but filled with images and symbols. Most people there seemed to be in awe of what they were hearing.

He called me out and prophesied to me. The prophecy was filled with various symbols with no obvious meaning to me. He spoke of me having dragged about a ball and chain and other descriptions that I do not recall. What I do recall is that I could not relate what he said to anything that was happening in my life at the time, and there was no ministry of life to

my spirit.

The meeting with “God’s 20th Century Prophet” came to a sudden end when the pastor discovered that, in private, he had prophesied to members of the congregation to give him money and land. If God did use him in a prophetic gift (and that is open to question), he had prostituted it for monetary gain.

He fit the category of those whom Jude lamented: “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily after the error of Balaam for a reward” (Jude 11). He was a false prophet, and the pastor was right to confront him and close the meeting.

### **I Encountered a Mistaken Prophet**

My phone rang, and the voice on the other end of the line, in a very emphatic tone, said, “I was lying by the pool meditating, and God spoke to me and said, ‘Call Eddie Hyatt, and tell him to start a church and call it The Gateway to Heaven.’”

This person also told me that he had seen a vision of the church building and described it in some detail as a white building situated in a large field.

Some things are as obvious as the nose on your face, and this prophecy was one of those. I knew it was not from God. However, I also knew that I should deal gently with this person who attended a weekly meeting Sue and I led. Knowing he was a new believer, and not wanting to squelch his spirit, I said, “Larry, I appreciate you telling me this, but just know that I would never undertake something of this magnitude unless God Himself told me that He wanted me to do it.”

Some weeks later, this brother, who was sincere (but misguided) in his zeal to be used of God in the gift of prophecy, was still attending our weekly Bible study. In these gatherings, we allowed, and encouraged, people to flow freely

in the gifts of the Spirit, but we also made it clear that we would follow the biblical injunction to test the spirits and judge prophecies.

On this particular evening, this brother announced that during a time of prayer that week God told him to tell me that I was not to put down roots in that city because I would be travelling. Deciding to use this as a teaching moment, I stopped him. "Wait a minute, Larry," I said. "What happened to that white church you saw a few weeks ago?"

He replied, "Oh, that might be 10 years down the road." I then asked, "Do you know what they did to people in the Old Testament who gave false prophecies?" With a note of irritation in his voice, he replied, "I know! I know! They stoned them!"

At this point everyone, including Larry, began to laugh. It was a healing moment. Larry suddenly realized that he needed to relax and stop trying to curry favor and impress others with his super spirituality. He realized that I would continue to accept him and be his friend, but I would not accept everything he said just because he prefaced it with a "thus saith the Lord" or a "God told me."

Larry's soulish prophecy about me starting a church in Tulsa and calling it "The Gateway to Heaven" was born out of his own personal struggles and desires at the time. He and his wife had been unable to find a church where they felt comfortable and accepted. He enjoyed our weekly meetings and secretly wished that Sue and I would start a new church.

His personal desires and feelings were interpreted as being from the Spirit of God, and he gave it forth as a prophecy. At the time, I had clear direction from the Lord and knew it was not from Him. I also knew that I needed to pastor Larry and coach him along in his prophetic zeal.

By the way, Larry was right on at times. One night, a vibrant

young woman came into our midst that no one knew. Larry felt led to pray for her. She consented, and I encouraged him to take the lead. As he prayed, God gave him a word of knowledge that she was deeply depressed and contemplating suicide. She began sobbing and confessed it was so. The Spirit of God then ministered powerfully to her.

Larry continued to grow in God and our friendship continued for many years until the time of his death a few years ago.

### **Why Integrity Is Essential**

I believe that most of the individuals who prophesied that Donald Trump would win the 2020 presidential election were mistaken prophets, not false prophets. However, if mistaken prophets refuse to own their mistakes and admit their human frailty, the pride can open them to deception, and they may move from being a mistaken prophet to being a false prophet.  
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*This article is derived from **Dr. Eddie Hyatt's** latest book, Prophets and Prophecy, available from Amazon and his website at .*

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