

Home Page

False Prophets

Prophecy, 1929 ed., p. 22

“Therefore their speech shows them to be false prophets. While they claim to speak in the name of the Lord, their predictions neither come true nor tend to magnify Jehovah’s name. According to the divine rule they prove to be false...If these prophecies have not been fulfilled, and if all possibility of fulfillment is past, then these prophets are proven false.”

The Watchtower, May 15, 1930, p. 154

“If he is a false prophet, his prophecy will fail to come to pass”

The Watchtower, May 15, 1930, p. 155

"The difference between a true and a false prophet is that the one is speaking the word of the Lord and the other is speaking his own dreams and guesses"

The Watchtower, May 15, 1930, p. 155

"The true prophet of God *today* will be telling forth what the Bible teaches, and those things that the Bible tells us are soon to come to pass. He will not be sounding forth man-made theories or guesses, either his own or those of others"

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The Watchtower, May 15, 1930, p. 155-156

"This text proves again that those men who foretell things out of harmony with the Bible statements are false prophets. In 1914-1918 these same three classes told the whole world that the great World War would end all wars and make the world safe for democracy; and that the young men who died on the field of battle would die sacrificial deaths as did Jesus and would go to heaven. Their prophecies did not come true. Therefore they are false prophets; and the people should no longer trust them as safe guides."

The Watchtower, October 15, 1958, p. 613

"'Sometime between April 15 and 23, 1957, Armageddon will sweep the world! Millions of persons will perish in its flames and the land will be scorched.' So prophesied a certain California pastor, Mihran Ask, in January, 1957. Such false prophets tend to put the subject of Armageddon in disrepute."

Awake!, October 8, 1968, p. 23

"True, there have been those in times past who predicted an 'end of the world,' even announcing a specific date...The 'end' did not come. They were guilty of false prophesying. Why? What was missing?...Missing from such people were God's truths and the evidence that he was guiding and using them."

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New World Translation, 1971 ed., p. 213

“However, the prophet who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die. And in case you should say in your heart: ‘How shall we know the word that Jehovah has not spoken?’ when the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word does not occur or come true, that is the word that Jehovah did not speak. With presumptuousness the prophet spoke it. You must not get frightened at him.”

Aid to Bible Understanding, 1971 ed., p. 1348

“The three essentials for establishing the credentials of the true prophet, as given through Moses, were: the true prophet would speak in Jehovah’s name; the things foretold would come to pass (Deut. 18:20-22); and his prophesying must promote true worship, being in harmony with God’s revealed word and commandments. (Deut. 13:1-4)”

Paradise Restored to Mankind--By Theocracy, 1972 ed., pp. 353-354

“Jehovah, the God of the true prophets, will put all false prophets to shame either by not fulfilling the false prediction of such self-assuming prophets or by having His own prophecies fulfilled in a way opposite to that predicted by the false prophets. False prophets will try to hide their reason for feeling shame by denying who they really are.”

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Awake!, March 22, 1993, p. 4

“Jehovah’s Witnesses, in their eagerness for Jesus’ second coming, have suggested dates that turned out to be incorrect. Because of this, some have called them false prophets. Never in these instances, however, did they presume to originate predictions ‘in the name of Jehovah.’ Never did they say, ‘These are the words of Jehovah.’ *The Watchtower*, the official journal of Jehovah’s Witnesses, has said: ‘We have *not* the gift of prophecy.’ (January 1883, page 425) ‘Nor would we have our writings revered or regarded as infallible.’ (December 15, 1896, page 306) *The Watchtower* has also said that the fact that some have Jehovah’s spirit ‘does not mean those now serving as Jehovah’s Witnesses are inspired. It does not mean that the writings in this magazine *The Watchtower* are inspired and infallible and without mistakes. (May 15, 1947, page 157) ‘*The Watchtower* does not claim to be inspired in its utterances, nor is it dogmatic.’ (August 15, 1950 page 263) ‘The brothers preparing these publications are not infallible. Their writings are not inspired as are those of Paul and the other Bible writers. (2 Tim. 3:16) And so, at times, it has been necessary, as understanding became clearer, to correct views. (Prov. 4:18)’ --February 15, 1981, page 19.”

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name; and therefore their speech shows them to be false prophets. While they claim to speak in the name of the Lord, their predictions neither come true nor tend to magnify Jehovah's name. According to the divine rule they prove to be false, and the Lord promises that in due time he will deal with them as he does with all hypocrites.—Matt. 24: 51.

From the rules by which the prophets would be tested or judged it is evident that some things which were spoken in the name of Jehovah by the prophets were to have fulfilment soon after the time spoken. But the coming to pass of some of these events was not alone sufficient to prove one a prophet. Complete fulfilment must take place in due time. When Jehovah had a message for the future time it was indicated by words of the prophet such as Jeremiah used, to wit, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord," or as Isaiah said, "It shall come to pass in that day." This is an important point in studying prophecy, and the student must keep it in mind. The test was provided by Jehovah, and to such test all the prophecies must be subjected. Many things spoken by the prophets of God have not yet had fulfilment. For instance, Isaiah prophesied that God would establish on earth a righteous government which shall rest upon the shoulder of the Messiah. (Isa. 9: 6, 7) Also that all the nations would go up to Jerusalem and learn of Jehovah, follow his teachings through his government, and learn war no more. (Isa. 2: 2-4) Jeremiah prophesied that God would make and inaugurate a new covenant with Israel and that by the terms of that covenant both those dead and those living should have an opportunity for a blessing. If these prophecies have not been fulfilled, and if all possibility of fulfilment is past, then these prophets are proven false.

God-given message with boldness and fearlessness at all times.

God used holy men to write the Bible, and gave them an understanding of what he wished them to write, by giving them special visions and revelations of his will and purpose. This special revelation of his will and purpose is called "inspiration", and is mentioned by Peter as follows: "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy spirit." —2 Pet. 1: 21.

These holy prophets were used by God to foretell his purpose and his work, as well as certain events that pertained to God's people who lived in the days when the prophecies were made, and also to his people who would live in the future. They foretold many things that had fulfilment at the first advent of the Lord, and many other things that are now in process of fulfilment and will be fulfilled in the near future. The many fulfilments of these prophecies at the first advent, which are now facts recorded in history, prove beyond any question that the men who uttered these prophecies were God's holy prophets and had the divine approval. Yet there are men in our day who dare to sneer at and criticize these prophets.

In addition to the Old Testament prophets, Jesus and the apostles were likewise prophets, because they gave to us a message from Jehovah God and foretold many events to occur at the second advent of the Lord. Since the Bible was completed, this special "inspiration" from God through visions and revelations has ceased, for the reason that it is no longer necessary. To one who has a proper faith in God and his Word, the Bible is sufficient. He does not need special revelation to bolster up his faith. Anyone who lacks faith in God's Word, and needs some special demonstration or evidence that God is true, cannot be pleasing to God. God is testing the faith of his own people now, their faith in his Word and the promises recorded therein.

Many professed people of God lack a proper faith, and are constantly seeking some outward signs or evidences of divine approval and acceptance. The apostle mentions these as follows: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4: 4) Jesus rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith, saying: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24: 25) God is dealing with his people now "according to their faith"; and a person who must depend upon his emotions or upon spiritistic, hypnotic or mesmeric revelations in order to know what the will of God is has no proper or acceptable faith in the revealed Word of God; and so Satan uses spiritism, mesmerism and other occult deceptions to blind his mind to the truth.

Those agents of Satan who use these methods of deception to blind the minds of the Lord's people are called false prophets.

The Bible is sufficient and needs no outside support, or signs to demonstrate its truthfulness. Paul says: "The holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." "All scripture inspired by God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." If this text is true, then any man who denies any portion of the inspired Word is a false prophet.

Some parts of the Bible are not inspired, however. Satan's words to mother Eve, of course, are not inspired. The words of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees are not inspired. The words of the three men who accused Job are not inspired, neither are the words of the prophets of Baal, the enemies of Israel, nor of Pilate, Herod, or those men and women who were possessed of demons. The text just quoted says: "All scripture inspired of God is profitable." It is the inspired scriptures that were written by holy men. It is these scriptures that honor and magnify the name of Jehovah God; they harmoniously proclaim his attributes; they contain no contradictions; they correctly state God's law or rule of action; and every prophetic utterance found in these inspired scriptures is sure of fulfilment.

Since the Bible was completed, and "inspiration" is no longer necessary, a true prophet is one who is faithfully proclaiming what is written in the Bible. Such a one is declaring that the Bible is the Word of God, and that it is true and contains no contradictions. He is constantly telling the people of a coming kingdom of righteousness which will bless all the families of earth, both living and dead.

Since the Bible was completed, and special "inspiration" is no longer necessary, a false prophet is one who denies that the Bible is the Word of God; denies that it is inspired; denies the virgin birth of Jesus; denies the necessity for the death of Jesus; denies the story of creation, sin, and the fall. These false prophets seize upon some new-found fossil remains, some old bones recently dug up, and try their best to undermine faith in the Bible and to give the lie to the same by proclaiming some wild theory or guess of their own, and then call these guesses by the high-sounding name of "science".

But it may be asked, How are we to know whether one is a true or a false prophet? There are at least three ways by which we can positively decide: (1) If he is a true prophet, his message will come to pass exactly as prophesied. If he is a false prophet, his prophecy will fail to come to pass. This rule is laid down by God himself, through Moses, as follows: "If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word

which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously."—Deut. 18: 21, 22.

(2) Any prophet whose message tends to turn people against God and his Word or to plant doubts in their hearts, or who denies or contradicts the Word of God, is a false prophet. In Deuteronomy 13: 5 are these words: "That prophet . . . shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God."

(3) All God's holy prophets have been, and still are, persecuted for their faithfulness in telling the message God has given them to tell, while the false prophets have never yet been persecuted. The reason for this is obvious. God's holy prophets foretell the destruction of all false prophets, the destruction of all wickedness and of all wicked people. Of course, this arouses the anger of the false prophets' father, the Devil; and he instigates all manner of persecution against God's prophets, and uses his dupes to do the persecuting. God's prophets never persecute anybody, not even their enemies. All persecution is of Satan.

Judged by these three tests, Moses, Samuel, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and all the minor prophets of the Old Testament, as well as Jesus and the apostles, were true prophets. Every one of these uttered prophecies which have already come true, and others which are to be fulfilled in the near future. Every one of them magnified the name of Jehovah God; every one of them believed in the Bible as the Word of God and honored and revered the same, and taught others to do likewise. They stood like adamant against the heathen gods and the doctrines and theories of men; and without exception they were persecuted for giving out their message.

The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible that they were God's holy prophets. The difference between a true and a false prophet is that the one is speaking the word of the Lord and the other is speaking his own dreams and guesses. This is most emphatically stated in Jeremiah 23: 25-32, which reads: "I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. . . . yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams. . . . The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. . . . Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, . . . and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them."

The true prophet of God today will be telling forth what the Bible teaches, and those things that the Bi-

ble tells us are soon to come to pass. He will not be sounding forth man-made theories or guesses, either his own or those of others. He will be telling forth the good news of the coming kingdom of Christ, which will bless all the families of the earth. Why will he be telling of this kingdom? The answer is, Because all God's holy prophets spoke of it, including Jesus and his apostles.

In the New Testament, and in our day, the word "prophet" has a thought similar to that of our word "teacher", in the sense of a public expounder. Hence when the term "false prophet" is used, we shall get the correct thought if we think of a false teacher. The false prophets or teachers of our day are referred to in the New Testament as "antichrists", for the reason that the word "antichrist" means "against Christ". Every person who denies the statements of Jesus or of the holy prophets is against Christ, because he is teaching that which is against the truth, against Christ and against Jehovah God.

The false prophets of our day are the financial, political and clerical prognosticators. They assume to foretell future events; but their dreams or guesses never come true, and are always contrary to the teachings of God's holy prophets. Let us note some examples of false teachings which are contrary to the teachings of Jesus and his apostles and which are put forth by the three classes just mentioned; namely, politicians, clerics and financiers.

With united voice they declare that the world is getting better and will continue to get better until Christ comes. Now note what God's holy teachers or prophets say on this subject. These declare that the world will get worse and worse, and that Christ will come for the purpose of converting the world. In 1 John 2: 18 we read: "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." This text tells us that in "the last time" the world will be filled with antichrists. This being true, of course it will not be converted, as the false teachers claim.

Again, in 1 Timothy 4: 1, 2 we read: "Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared [as] with a hot iron." Again, in 2 Timothy 3: 1-5 is the following statement: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers"; and then follows a long list of other sins which will prevail in the last days. This text proves again that those men who foretell things out of harmony with the Bible statements are false prophets.

In 1914-1918 these same three classes told the whole

world that the great World War would end all wars and make the world safe for democracy; and that the young men who died on the field of battle would die sacrificial deaths as did Jesus and would go to heaven. Their prophecies did not come true. Therefore they are false prophets; and the people should no longer trust them as safe guides, but should look to the Lord through his revealed Word for their instructions as to what is to occur on the earth in the future.

The Apostle Peter warns us of these false prophets in the last days, saying: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them." (2 Pet. 2:1) There are many thousands of prominent religious leaders in our day who deny that the blood of Jesus bought the race; they claim that it was not necessary for Jesus to die; they go even further and claim that he did not die, but was really more alive than ever, when he was buried in Joseph's tomb. These are false prophets, because they contradict the Bible and the words of the holy prophets, and thus cast reproach on the Bible and lead people to doubt its truthfulness, and thus turn people away from God.

The words of God's true prophets on this subject are as follows: "Without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. 9:22) "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3) "Ye are bought with a price." (1 Cor. 6:20) "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."—1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

Several texts tell us that Jesus was dead, and was raised on the third day. (1 Cor. 15:4) The false teachers claim that Jesus was not dead, and hence did not need a resurrection. These false prophets claim that it is the body that will be resurrected. But Paul, one of God's holy prophets, speaking of the resurrection of the dead, says: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool! . . . that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be . . . ; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him."—1 Cor. 15:35-38.

The false prophets claim that the earth is to be burned up at some future time; but God's holy prophets emphatically state the contrary. In Ecclesiastes 1:4 we read: "The earth abideth for ever." Again, in Isaiah 45:18 we read: "God himself . . . formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited."

These false prophets tell the people that God has provided a lake of fire and brimstone in which to torture for ever those who do not accept their teach-

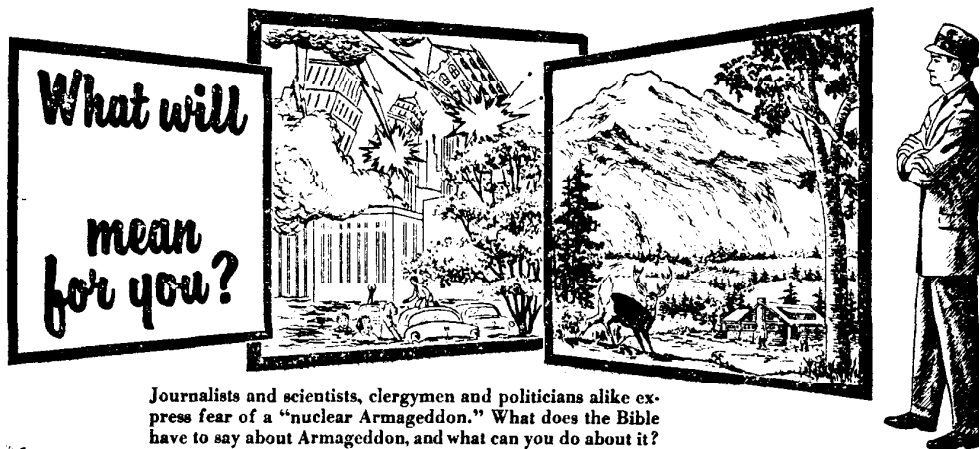
ings; others tell the people that many are in purgatory, and that it is possible to pray them out. They teach the people the doctrine of the trinity; namely, that 'God the Father, God the Son, and God the holy ghost are three persons in one, and all three equal in substance, in power and in eternity'. They tell the people that they need not study the Bible, 'because they cannot understand it'; and that if the people will follow the instructions of these false prophets they will not need to study the Bible. Without exception, these things are unscriptural and untrue, and tend to turn the people away from God and from Bible study.

These false prophets claim that the governments of earth, even though very wicked and corrupt, constitute God's kingdom on earth. They claim that all the saved will be in heaven, in face of hundreds of texts which say that the righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein for ever. (Isa. 60:21) They discourage Bible study by telling the people that the 'Bible is an old fiddle on which one can play any tune', that it is a book of mystery, and that God did not intend it to be understood. Such remarks turn people away from God and from the Bible, and brand the authors of such statements as being false prophets.

Why is it that the words of God's holy prophets are discredited, denied and sneered at, while the words of these false prophets are given the widest possible publicity, and approved by all great men of earth? The records of God's holy prophets, found in the Bible, show that Adam was the first man, and that he lived about 6,056 years ago. Quite recently a man found some bones in Nebraska, and broadcast to the world that they were the bones of a man who had lived in Nebraska over 5,000,000 years ago. His statement was wild, unreasonable and foolish; yet it could be published in the best magazines and newspapers, and retailed from the best pulpits and platforms in the world.

On the contrary, if any one should try to defend the accuracy of the Bible and prove that its authors were holy men sent of God, his copy would be refused by the best newspapers and magazines, and he would be denied the use of halls or pulpits to put forth his message. Should some paper be liberal enough to publish his defense, it would be so garbled as to discredit the author and hold him up to ridicule. Why is this true? The answer is that the false prophets, financial, political and religious, control the pulpit and the press; and that they desire to hold on to their positions of trust, influence and power. They do not want the truth, namely, that they are false prophets, to get out to the people; and so they use their power over the pulpit and press to keep the message from the people.

Anyone who will stand up to defend Jehovah God



Journalists and scientists, clergymen and politicians alike express fear of a "nuclear Armageddon." What does the Bible have to say about Armageddon, and what can you do about it?

SOMETIME between April 15 and 23, 1957, Armageddon will sweep the world! Millions of persons will perish in its flames and the land will be scorched." So prophesied a certain California pastor, Mihran Ask, in January, 1957.¹

Such false prophets tend to put the subject of Armageddon in disrepute. It would be a serious mistake, however, to dismiss Armageddon lightly on their account. Did not the religious leaders of Jesus' day misunderstand and misapply God's Word? But that did not justify anyone's despising Jesus' preaching of that Word, did it? So let none despise the subject of Armageddon merely because some misapply its prophecies. It is of the deepest concern to every living person, being one of the most important and timely teachings of the Scriptures. What it will mean for you will depend upon the course you take between now and Armageddon.

The term Armageddon is found but once in the Scriptures. "I saw three unclean . . . expressions inspired by demons . . . , and they go forth to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty. And they gathered them togeth-

er to the place that is called in Hebrew Armageddon."—Rev. 16:13, 14, 16, *margin*.

Armageddon literally means "Mountain of Megiddo," or "mountain of the assembly of troops." Situated some sixty miles northwest of Jerusalem, Megiddo has also come to be the name of an entire region, its plain, valley and city. Repeatedly, crucial battles were fought in this region, not only in Bible times but also since. There Judges Joshua, Barak and Gideon gained notable victories over the enemies of the Israelites. There also Kings Saul, Ahaziah and Josiah died in battle. Coming to modern times, there Napoleon, in 1799, handed the Turks a stinging defeat, even as did Lord Allenby in 1918.²

MISCONCEPTIONS

The subject of Armageddon is much misunderstood and that not only by extremists. Its importance is so little appreciated that a modern book on theology more likely than not will fail to make any reference to it. Even in certain voluminous Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias one looks in vain for any listing of it.

Then there are some, such as Allen P. Wikgren, chairman of the New Testament department of the University of Chicago,

A TIME TO *'Lift Up Your Head'* in CONFIDENT HOPE



THE evidence that we are far along in the "last days" can be either good news or bad news to you, depending on the position you take. If you long to be free from a rule that has proved both unsatisfactory and unrighteous and that is torn more and more by discord and confusion; if you really love what is right and have a sincere desire to do the will of your Creator, then this evidence should make you rejoice. Why? Because, as Jesus Christ said: "As these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because *your deliverance is getting near.*"—Luke 21:28.

A perfect government, heaven-based and with heaven's blessing and heaven's power backing it up, will soon take complete control of this earth. In this way God will answer the prayer: "Let your kingdom come." What better news could there be?

Still some persons may say: "How can you be sure? Maybe it is later than many people think. But maybe it is not as late as some persons claim. People have been mistaken about these prophecies before."

The Difference

True, there have been those in times past who predicted an "end to the world,"

even announcing a specific date. Some have gathered groups of people with them and fled to the hills or withdrawn into their houses waiting for the end. Yet, nothing happened. The "end" did not come. They were guilty of false prophesying. Why? What was missing?

Missing was the full measure of evidence required in fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Missing from such people were God's truths and the evidence that he was guiding and using them.

But what about today? Today we have the evidence required, *all of it.* And it is overwhelming! All the many, many parts of the great sign of the "last days" are here, together with verifying Bible chronology.

Take a simple illustration: Suppose on a hot day at the beginning of summer, someone told you that winter was coming within a week because he had seen some trees without leaves. But those trees could have died from disease or age. So, by itself that would not be enough evidence that winter was approaching. Especially so when none of the other trees had shed their leaves, when the heat continued day after day, and when the calendar told you it was just the beginning of summer. You

come because of any craving of his soul to the place that Jehovah will choose, 7 he must also minister in the name of Jehovah his God the same as all his brothers, the Levites, who are standing there before Jehovah. 8 An equal share he should eat, besides what he gets from things he sells of his ancestral goods.

9 "When you are entered into the land that Jehovah your God is giving you, you must not learn to do according to the detestable things of those nations. 10 There should not be found in you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, anyone who employs divination, a practicer of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer, 11 or one who binds others with a spell or anyone who consults a spirit medium^a or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead. 12 For everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah, and on account of these detestable things Jehovah your God is driving them away from before you. 13 You should prove yourself faultless with Jehovah your God.

14 "For these nations whom you are dispossessing used to listen to those practicing magic and to those who divine; but as for you, Jehovah your God has not given you anything like this. 15 A prophet from your own midst, from your brothers, like me, is what Jehovah your God will raise up for you—to him YOU people should listen— 16 in response to all that you asked of Jehovah^b your God in Ho'reb on the day of the congregation, saying, 'Do not let me hear again the voice of Jehovah my God, and this great fire do not let me see anymore, that I may not die.' 17 At that Jehovah said to me, 'They have done well in speaking what they did. 18 A prophet I shall raise up for them from the midst of their brothers, like you; and I shall indeed put my words in his mouth, and he will certainly speak to them all that I shall command him. 19 And it must occur that the man who will not listen to my words

that he will speak in my name, I shall myself require an account from him.

20 "However, the prophet who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die. 21 And in case you should say in your heart: "How shall we know the word that Jehovah has not spoken?" 22 when the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word does not occur or come true, that is the word that Jehovah did not speak. With presumptuousness the prophet spoke it. You must not get frightened at him."

19 "When Jehovah your God cuts off the nations whose land Jehovah your God is giving you, and you have dispossessed them and have dwelt in their cities and their houses, 2 you will set apart three cities for yourself in the midst of your land that Jehovah your God is giving you to take possession of it. 3 You will prepare for yourself the way, and you must divide up the territory of your land that Jehovah your God proceeded to give you as a possession into three parts, and it must be for any manslayer to flee there.

4 "Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and has to live: When he strikes his fellowman without knowing it and he was no hater of him formerly; 5 or when he goes with his fellowman into the woods to gather wood, and his hand has been raised to strike with the ax to cut the tree, and the iron has slipped off from the wooden handle, and it has hit his fellowman and he has died, he himself should flee to one of these cities and must live. 6 Otherwise, the avenger of blood^c may, because his heart is hot, chase after the manslayer and actually overtake him, since the way is great; and he may indeed strike his soul fatally, whereas there is no sentence of death for him, because he was no hater of him formerly. 7 That is why I am commanding you, saying, "Three cities you will set apart for yourself."

^a See Deuteronomy 16:5, footnote³. ^b See Leviticus 19:31, footnote³. ^c "Jehovah." Instead of the Greek word *Kyrios* the papyrus fragment of the 2d century B.C.E. known as P. Fouad Inventory No. 266, of the Greek *Septuagint Version*, has the four-letter Hebrew word (יהוה, YHWH) for God's name here. See verse 5, footnote⁴. ^d Or, "the go'el of blood," M; "the avenger of the blood," LXX; "the neighbor of him whose blood was shed," Vg.

Ezek. 1:1-3; Amos 7:14, 15), by which means they also knew what to proclaim. (Acts 28:26; 2 Pet. 1:21) Some showed great reluctance initially. (Ex. 3:11; 4:10-17; Jer. 1:4-10) In Elisha's case, his divine appointment came through his predecessor, Elijah, and was symbolised by Elisha's throwing his mantle or official garment over Elisha.—1 Kl. 19:19-21; see *Dawn*, pages 467, 468.

Though appointed by Jehovah's spirit, it does not appear that the prophets spoke continually under inspiration. Rather, God's spirit 'came upon them' at certain times, revealing the messages to be announced. (Ezek. 11:4, 5; Mic. 3:8) This had a stirring effect upon them, impelling them to speak. (1 Sam. 10:10; Jer. 20:9; Amos 3:8) They not only did things that were out of the ordinary but also their expression and manner doubtless reflected the intensity of their feeling. This may explain in part what is meant by individuals' "behaving like prophets." (1 Sam. 10:6-11; 19:20-24; Jer. 29:24-32; compare Acts 2:4, 12-17; 6:15; 7:55.) Their total concentration and zealous boldness in their mission might cause their behavior to appear strange, even irrational, to others, just as a prophet so appeared to military chiefs when Jehu was anointed. Yet, on realizing that the man was a prophet, the chiefs accepted his message with full seriousness. (2 Kl. 9:1-13; compare Acts 26:24, 25.) When Saul, in pursuit of David, was caused to 'behave like a prophet,' he stripped off his garments and lay "naked all that day and all that night," during which time David evidently escaped. (1 Sam. 19:18-20:1) This does not mean that prophets frequently went naked, for the Biblical record shows the contrary. In the two other cases recorded, the prophet went naked for a purpose, to represent some fact of his prophecy. (Isa. 20:2-4; Mic. 1:8-11) The reason for Saul's nakedness—whether to show him as a mere man, divested of his royal garments, impotent against Jehovah's own regal authority and power, or for some other purpose—is not stated.

Jehovah used various methods to inspire the prophets: verbal communication through angels (Ex. 3:2-4; compare Luke 1:11-17; Hebrews 1:1, 2; 2:1, 2), visions that impressed God's message on the conscious mind (Isa. 1:1; Hab. 1:1), dreams or night visions given while the prophet slept (Dan. 7:1), and messages conveyed while the person was in a trance. (Acts 10:10, 11; 22:17-21) On occasion, music might contribute to the prophet's receiving the divine communication. (1 Sam. 10:5; 2 Kl. 3:15) Similarly, the proclamation of the inspired message was effected in diverse manners. (Heb. 1:1) Generally the prophet spoke it out orally, both in public places and in sparsely populated regions. (Jer. 7:1, 2; 36:4-13; Matt. 3:3) But he might dramatise the message by use of symbols or symbolic acts, as in Ezekiel's portraying the siege of Jerusalem by use of a brick, or in Hosea's marriage to Gomer.—Ezek. 4:1-3; Hos. 1:2, 3; compare 1 Kings 11:30-39; 2 Kings 13:14-19; Jeremiah 19:1, 10, 11; see DREAM; INSPIRATION; VISION.

DISTINGUISHING THE TRUE FROM THE FALSE

In some cases, such as that of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus, God's prophets performed miraculous works that attested the genuineness of their message and office. Not all, however, are recorded as performing such powerful works. The three essentials for establishing the credentials of the true prophet, as given through Moses, were: the true prophet would speak in Jehovah's name; the things foretold would come to pass. (Deut. 18:20-21) And his pronouncements must promote true worship, being in harmony with God's revealed word and commandments. (Deut. 18:1-4) The last requirement was probably the most vital and decisive, for an individual might hypocritically use God's name and, by coincidence, his prediction might see fulfillment. But the true prophet was not solely or even primarily a prognosticator, as has been shown. Rather, he was an advocate of righteousness, and his message dealt primarily with moral standards and their application. He expressed God's mind on

matters. (Isa. 1:10-20; Mic. 6:1-12) Hence, it was not necessary to wait perhaps for years or generations to determine whether the prophet was true or false by fulfillment of a prediction. If his message contradicted God's revealed will and standards he was false. Thus, a prophet who foretold peace for Israel or Judah at a time when the people were engaging in disobedience to God's Word and Law, of necessity was false.—Jer. 6:13, 14; 14:11-16.

Jesus' later warning concerning false prophets paralleled that of Moses. Though using his name, and giving "signs and wonders to lead astray," their fruits would prove them "workers of lawlessness."—Matt. 7:15-23; Mark 13:21-23; compare 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3.

The true prophet never foretold simply to satisfy human curiosity. Every prediction related to God's will, purpose, standards or judgment. (1 Kl. 11:20-30; Isa. 7:3-9) Often the future events foretold were the consequence of existing conditions; as the people sowed, so they would reap. The false prophets lulled the people and their leaders with soothing assurances that, despite their unrighteous course, God was still with them to protect and prosper them. (Jer. 23:16-30; 28:1-14; Ezek. 13:1-16; compare Luke 6:26.) They imitated the true prophets, employing symbolic language and actions. (1 Kl. 22:11; Jer. 28:10-14) While some were outright frauds, many were evidently prophets who became delinquent or apostate. (Compare 1 Kings 18:19; 22:9-7; Isaiah 28:7; Jeremiah 23:11-15.) Some were women, false prophetesses. (Ezek. 13:17-23; compare Revelation 2:20.) A "spirit of uncleanness" replaced God's spirit. All such false prophets were to be put to death.—Zech. 13:2, 3; Deut. 13:5.

As to those measuring up to the divine standards, the fulfillment of certain "short-range" prophecies, some being accomplished in just a day or a year, gave basis for confidence that their prophecies relating to a more distant future would also see fulfillment.—1 Kl. 13:1-5; 14:12, 17; 2 Kl. 4:16, 17; 7:1, 2, 16-20.

"SONS OF THE PROPHETS"

As Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar* explains (second edition, 1952 printing; p. 418), the Hebrew *ben* (son of) or *beneh* (sons of) may denote "membership of a guild or society (or of a tribe, or any definite class)." (Compare Nehemiah 3:8, where "a member of the ointment mixers" is literally "a son of the ointment mixers.") The "sons of the prophets" may thus describe a school of instruction for those called to this vocation or simply a cooperative association of prophets. Such prophetic groups are mentioned as being at Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal. (2 Kl. 2:3, 5; 4:38; compare 1 Samuel 10:5, 10.) Samuel presided over a group at Ramah (1 Sam. 19:19, 20), and Elisha seems to have held a similar position in his day. (2 Kl. 4:38; 6:1-3; compare 1 Kings 18:13.) The record mentions their building their own dwelling place and the use of a borrowed tool, which may indicate that they lived simply. Though often sharing quarters and food in common, they might receive individual assignments to go out on prophetic missions.—1 Kl. 20:35-42; 2 Kl. 4:1, 2, 39; 6:1-17; 9:1, 2.

PROPHETS IN THE CHRISTIAN GREEK SCRIPTURES

The *prophetes* corresponds to the Hebrew *na-vi*. The priest Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, acted as prophet in revealing God's purpose concerning his son, John, who would be "called a prophet of the Most High." (Luke 1:76) John's simple mode of life and his message were reminiscent of earlier Hebrew prophets. He was widely recognized as a prophet; even Herod felt some restraint due to him. (Mark 1:4-6; Matt. 21:26; Mark 6:20) Jesus said John was "far more than a prophet."—Matt. 11:7-10; compare Luke 1:16, 17; John 3:27-30.

Jesus, the Messiah, was "The Prophet," the long-awaited one foretold by Moses. (John 1:19-21, 25-27; 6:14; 7:40; Deut. 18:18, 19; Acts 3:19-26) His ability

rected, regardless of who had offered the interpretation. Loyalty to God and to his inspired Word was the issue here to be met. So, as an illustration of the loyalty required, even if a fleshly son should offer a wrong interpretation of divine prophecy and should persist in it, like a false prophet, then his own fleshly parents in their loyalty to God would have nothing further to do with him on a religious basis. Christian parents could not do as under the Mosaic Law covenant, namely, have him put to death; but they could pronounce him spiritually dead to themselves in spite of their parenthood of him physically. In this way, figuratively speaking, they "must pierce him through because of his prophesying." (Zechariah 13:3; compare Deuteronomy 13:1-5.) With their full consent, such a false prophet would be expelled, disfellowshipped, from the Christian congregation. By such loyalty on the part of all members of the restored remnant, the "prophet" of falsehood would be made to pass out of their "land."

²¹ Yes, too, the "spirit of uncleanness" would thus be made to pass out of their spiritual "land." If that spirit were an inspired expression of uncleanness by a would-be prophet or was any tendency, trend, or inclination to uncleanness, it would be disapproved and resisted by the loyal ones. As a consequence any uncleanness as to religious teaching or as to moral behavior would be forced to pass out, under the driving force of God's holy spirit. The God-given spiritual estate must be maintained as a "land" where clean, Scriptural living is carried on. Persons spiritually and morally unclean must be disfellowshipped therefrom.—2 Corinthians 6:14 to 7:1; compare Deuteronomy 13:6-18.

RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY EXPOSED

²² Jehovah, the God of the true prophets, will put all false prophets to shame either by not fulfilling the false prediction of such self-assuming prophets or by having

²¹ How, too, was the "spirit of uncleanness" made to pass out of their spiritual "land"?

^{22, 23.} (a) How does Jehovah put the false prophets to shame? (b) How does Jehovah describe the false prophets trying to hide their reason for feeling shame?

His own prophecies fulfilled in a way opposite to that predicted by the false prophets. False prophets will try to hide their reason for feeling shame by denying who they really are. They will try to avoid being killed or being pronounced spiritually dead by Jehovah's loyal worshipers. He foretold this by having his true prophet Zechariah continue on to say:

²³ "And it must occur in that day that the prophets will become ashamed, each one of his vision when he prophesies; and they will not wear an official garment of hair for the purpose of deceiving. And he will certainly say, 'I am no prophet. I am a man cultivating the soil, because an earthling man himself acquired me from my youth on.' And one must say to him, 'What are these wounds on your person between your hands?' And he will have to say, 'Those with which I was struck in the house of my intense lovers.'"—Zechariah 13:4-6, *NW; JB; NE; NAB*; contrast Amos 7:14-17.

²⁴ Thus Jehovah foretold that his people, in their "land" of restoration, would be so well instructed with his Word and would be so loyal to Him and His true prophecies that they would refuse to be friends and intense lovers of any false prophet. If they did not kill him, then they would discipline him and strike him so hard in their indignation that visible wounds and scars would result. Such marks on his person, yes, on his breast which would be partly exposed, would betray his identity in spite of the fact that he had discarded official garments that he had assumed to wear as a *bona fide* prophet of Jehovah God. From whom had he got such scar-producing wounds? From his intense lovers, whether these were his own fleshly parents or his intimate associates. However, their intense loyalty to Jehovah as the God of true prophecy would be stronger than their till-then intense love for a deceptive prophet. They would place love of God and his inspired Word above personal friendships with fleshly relatives or associates. Such a course would cause "the prophets

²⁴ The scar-producing wounds on the deceptive prophet were admitted by him to be inflicted by whom, and what would this indicate as to loyalty to God in comparison with attachment to fleshly loved ones?

words do not come true, they should not be viewed as false prophets such as those warned against at Deuteronomy 18:20-22. In their human fallibility, they misinterpreted matters.*

Undeterred by previous failures, some seem to have been spurred on by the approach of the year 2000 and have made further predictions of the end of the world. *The Wall Street Journal* of December 5, 1989, published an article entitled "Millennium Fever: Prophets Proliferate, the End Is Near." With the year 2000 approaching, various evangelicals are predicting that Jesus is coming and that the 1990's will be "a time of troubles that has not been seen before." At the time of this writing, the latest occurrence was in the Republic of Korea, where the Mission for the Coming Days predicted that on October 28, 1992, at midnight, Christ would come and take believers to heav-

en. Several other doomsday groups made similar predictions.

The flood of false alarms is unfortunate. They are like the wolf-wolf cries of the shepherd boy—people soon dismiss them, and when the true warning comes, it too is ignored.

But why has there been such a tendency through the centuries and down to our day for false alarms to be sounded, as Jesus said they would be? (Matthew 24:23-26) Jesus, after telling his followers about different events that would mark his return, said to them, as we read at Matthew 24:36-42: "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father. For just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be. . . . Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."

They were told not only to be on the watch and to be prepared but also to watch with eagerness. Romans 8:19 says: "For the eager expectation of the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God." Human nature is such that when we fervently hope and yearn for something and wait in eager expectation of it, a powerful temptation arises within us to see it at the door even when the evidence is insufficient. In our eagerness false alarms may be sounded.

What, then, will distinguish the true warning from the false ones? For the answer, please see the following article.

* Jehovah's Witnesses, in their eagerness for Jesus' second coming, have suggested dates that turned out to be incorrect. Because of this, some have called them false prophets. Never in these instances, however, did they presume to originate predictions in the name of Jehovah. Never did they say, 'These are the words of Jehovah.' *The Watchtower*, the official journal of Jehovah's Witnesses, has said: "We have not the gift of prophecy." (January 1883, page 425) "Nor would we have our writings revered or regarded as infallible." (December 15, 1896, page 306) *The Watchtower* has also said that the fact that some have Jehovah's spirit "does not mean those now serving as Jehovah's witnesses are inspired. It does not mean that the writings in this magazine *The Watchtower* are inspired and infallible and without mistakes." (May 15, 1947, page 157) "*The Watchtower* does not claim to be inspired in its utterances, nor is it dogmatic." (August 15, 1950, page 263) "The brothers preparing these publications are not infallible. Their writings are not inspired as are those of Paul and the other Bible writers. (2 Tim. 3:16) And so, at times, it has been necessary, as understanding became clearer, to correct views. (Prov. 4:18)"—February 15, 1981, page 19.

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