

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: Recognizing False Prophets

by Alane Rozelle, Nov. 2025

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You might be wondering right now, "What does this topic have to do with home and foreign missions?" It has a lot to do with missions and evangelism because people are being led astray around the world and right here in the United States by Christians claiming to have a special "word from the Lord" or a dream in which God spoke heavenly secrets to them. This is a danger that has been largely ignored in my circles of contact. Videos, podcasts, books and movies have begun to inundate and captivate the gullible public. Whenever times are difficult and uncertain, people naturally look for and turn to others who claim to have the answers, the way out, the path of hope and light. And unfortunately, they are desperate enough to ignore the truths in Scripture which may categorically oppose the statements of those so-called, self-proclaimed prophets. Any one of us might be at risk of being fooled at one time or another, so let us delve into this topic of pulling the wool off the wolf.

Slide 2: What is a "Prophet"?

Definition: One word used for prophet in the Old Testament is **nebi**. In each use, it designates men who were appointed by God to speak his word. Thus, a prophet was someone who spoke the words of God. The whole Word of God may in this general sense be spoken of as prophetic, inasmuch as it was written by people who received the revelation they communicated from God, no matter what its nature might be. The foretelling of future events was not a necessary but only an incidental part of the prophetic office. The great task assigned to the prophets whom God raised up among the people was "to correct moral and religious abuses, to proclaim the great moral and religious truths which are connected with the character of God, and which lie at the foundation of his government." And therefore, anyone who speaks God's word could conceivably be considered a "prophet." in the general sense. Therefore, these persons who claim to be specially called to be a Prophet, who claim secret knowledge from God, and who focus on predicting the timeline of end-time events, may be deceiving themselves as well as others.

We have numerous examples of prophets—major and minor!-- in the Bible. From Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, etc. to Jesus in the gospels and Agabus in Acts. All of their

prophecies either came true or lie yet in the future. We believe their words can be trusted. We know from Scripture that God backed them up.

SLIDE 3: FALSE PROPHETS

So how might we then define a False Prophet or False Teacher?

A false prophet (or false teacher) is an individual who claims to speak for God, to have a special revelation, or to have prophetic gifts, but whose message, motives, or character are ultimately deceptive and lead people away from truth and healthy spiritual practice.

Their Appearance:

- They often appear charming, eloquent, and outwardly devout. This is the “sheep’s clothing” of the common proverb.
- They also may perform impressive signs or claim to have great success (Deuteronomy 13:1-3, Matthew 7:22-23).

Additionally, the Bible describes false prophets as **adulterous (Jeremiah 23:14), treacherous (Zephaniah 3:4), drunkards (Isaiah 28:7), wicked (Jeremiah 23:11), liars (Jeremiah 14:14; 23:14), and associated with divination and witchcraft (Jeremiah 14:14; Ezekiel 22:28; Acts 13:6). Not exactly a group we should want to be associated with!**

A list of false prophets in scripture would include **Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah**. These prophets were among the Jewish exiles in Babylon and falsely claimed to bring messages of peace and security from God, in contrast to the true prophecies of Jeremiah. There was also Balaam who was hired to curse the Israelites but was prevented by his talking donkey! In the New Testament, we find Elymas, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet who opposed Paul and Barnabas and tried to turn the proconsul Sergius Paulus away from the faith.

The Core Danger is that false prophets twist truth to gain personal power, wealth, or sexual control, leading followers into destructive heresies and away from sound doctrine.

We can all probably think of some famous false prophets, false teachers, false leaders of modern times such as Jim Jones, infamous for creating an end-time community in Guyana and leading 918 people to drink poisoned purple Kool-Aid; David Koresh, who saw himself as a messiah and died with 75 others in a shoot-out with ATF officers in Waco, TX; and Marshall Applewhite, the leader of the Heaven’s Gate cult who committed suicide in an attempt to board an alien spacecraft flying behind the Hale-Bopp comet. All of these leaders ultimately led their followers into suicide. These are extreme false teachers and false prophets. There are, however, many, many false prophets today who are lesser known, who are not forming

large isolationist groups, yet they are no less dangerous for leading people away from the Truth with false messages.

In the 60s and 70s we were terrorized by Hal Lindsay's dire warnings in his book "The Late Great Planet Earth."

After that you may remember "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988" written by former NASA engineer, Edgar Whisenant. He boldly predicted Jesus' return would occur in September of 1988. Obviously, because we are all still here, the date passed without incident, so he quickly backpedaled, claiming a miscalculation, and reissued his prediction for September 1989, then 1993, and so on, until his death in 2001.

Then there was the "Left Behind" series of books and movies that captivated believers from 1995 to 2007.

The turn of our century from 1999 to 2000, more commonly known as Y2K, was similarly globally believed to be the End of the World. Pastors urged their churches to dig bunkers and to stock up on enough canned goods and toilet paper to last until the end of Armageddon. Yet it too passed without a blip in our comfortable lives and here we are 25 years later!

Similarly, Jehovah's Witnesses are well-known for repeated date-setting, despite the fact that Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 24:36 that nobody knows the day or hour of his return and he warned against false Christs and false prophets.

Amazingly, none of these examples of wrong predictions about a pre-trib rapture or any other future events has deterred others from themselves trying to prophesy. I have a very dear friend who truly loves God and has always been involved in reading the Bible, teaching Sunday School classes, etc. but who also is quite vulnerable to the visions and "words from the Lord" of current self-proclaimed prophets who launch their predictions online accompanied by sensational videos. She frequently shares these links with me. Sometimes, I ignore them. Recently, I decided to watch one she sent in August in which a Jewish woman claimed to have died, gone to heaven, and been given a special word from Jesus that he would return on Rosh Hoshanah (in September) of this year. After watching it, I tried to reply to my friend with scripture, pointing out the inaccuracies in the prediction and that I would definitely be still seeing her in October. She responded with: "I believe in this. You do what you want with it." Guess what? Today is November 1; she's still here; she's coming to my house tonight. There has been no message from her admitting that the woman's prediction was wrong. And unfortunately, this is how they continue to get away with their false prophecies: they are never held accountable. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's look at some ways to test for a false prophet or false teacher.

Slide 3: Test 1: The Doctrinal Test (The Message)

The most critical test is the content of their teaching. How does their message stack up against scripture?

Red Flag Teaching

#1: The False Prophet Denies Core Truths

Truth to Contrast

Just as the serpent in the Garden of Eden contradicted God's warning to Adam & Eve that they would die if they ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, so false prophets may contradict God's word about the 100% humanity of Jesus.

Key Scripture

1 John 4:1-3 "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

#2: Adds to Scripture

False prophets claim that God has given them a secret extra book, a secret vision, a secret word, that God has changed his mind even.

Isaiah 8:20 "Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn."

#3: Promotes Idolatry

A false prophet promotes idolatry. But **Deut. 13:1-3** states: If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

#4: Gives "Easy Grace"

2 Peter 2:1-2 describes them clearly:

"There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign

However, Paul warned the Philippians to work out their faith "in fear and trembling." (2:12) We should not take grace for granted. We should not assume our salvation is now a "given" or

The Man of Lawlessness

2 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, **2** not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. **3** Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for ***that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness[a] is revealed**, the man doomed to destruction. **4** He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that ***he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**

5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? **6** And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. **7** For the secret

power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. **8** And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. **9** The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, **10** and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. **11** For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie **12** and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

***4 very impt pts! The rebellion has not occurred, the man of lawlessness has not set himself up as God in the temple (which means the Temple has to be built first!), and he has not yet been revealed.**

Paul is SO clear here: Do not be deceived! Do not become easily unsettled!