

Recognizing false prophets Volume 6 Chronicle 2018012801

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Text: Jeremiah 5, 8, 14, 23; II Corinthians 11:12–15; II Timothy 4:3–5

God gave His prophet Jeremiah a message because of Judah's rebellious pursuit of idolatry: the Babylonians are coming to destroy Jerusalem. However, this uncomfortable news was met with little fanfare, for the people had chosen to listen to other prophets who provided a rosier outlook. The false teachers claimed that all was well, and avoided addressing the deep rooted sin problems. Judah failed to recognize and reject false prophets. In the united States of America, we are faced with similar circumstances. We need discernment in this day of confusion.

What characteristics identify false prophets?

1. A Diminished View of God's Holiness

Speaking falsely about God, false prophets claim that God will not or cannot judge; they have denied Jehovah, and said, it is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine: and the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. (Jeremiah 5:12–13 ASV). Everyone is going to heaven is the common cry of our age. God is merciful is used as a defense for the status quo of wickedness. Our culture god shops, seeking selfauthentication, health, wealth, and sexual preference. At the misinformation and behest of false prophets, we chase after gods that suit our desires.

2. An Exaggerated View of Humanity's Goodness

Believing that humanity is essentially good, true change and repentance are ignored. Everyone is fine, and their ministries are more concerned with conveying temporary healing than spiritual holiness. Like the ancient people of Judah, many people love to have it this way; a wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in

the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof (Jeremiah 5:30–31 ASV)? False prophets exalt humanity and its abilities, lauding the power of positive thinking and the like. Yes, optimism is good, but optimism will not repair our relationship with God. Humanity does retain some worth through the marred image of God within us, but the heart is deceitful above all things!

3. Various Sources for Their Knowledge

False prophets, citing special revelations from God, offer lying visions; then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then Jehovah said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake I unto them: they prophesy unto you a lying vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their own heart (Jeremiah 14:13–14 ASV). They can dabble in occult divination, incorrectly presuming they are consulting heavenly powers, but demonic powers disguise themselves as divine representatives. Satan masquerades as an angel of light, and his false prophets present themselves as agents of righteousness, even as they invoke the name of another Jesus. Deceived in their minds, they do not paint God as He is; God is described as the God they wish Him to be.

4. Hidden Motives

While cloaked with faux goodwill, their true motives lie beneath the surface. Greed is a frequent culprit. Many false prophets have amassed fortunes from poor people, promising that the giver will be blessed and made rich by God. They are trained in lies; do not be deceived. Pride is another motive in the psyches of false prophets. They want fame, and their followers nearly worship them. These wicked teachers pronounce fictitious

proclamations and prophecies, and they set themselves up as God's singular spokesperson. When their lying prophecies do not come to pass, they blame and shame their followers saying, you did not have enough faith. They will be judged harshly for putting words into the mouth of God.

False prophets are God's judgment upon a nation. God uses them as a stumbling block since we are rebellious and idolatrous. Many will go to them because many do not want to hear they are sinners in need of repentance. True prophets always preach God's Word, speaking faithfully, emphasizing the holiness of God and His true character. Even when no one seems to like the message, we must teach about coming judgment, humanity's sinfulness, divine mercy, and the way of salvation in Christ.

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