

How Do I Know If This Is True?

1 Timothy 4:1-5; Matthew 7:15-20 / Deuteronomy 13:1-11

I. God Uses Prophets

A. Prophets bubble like fountains for God. <<To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves.>> My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. (Psalm 45:1)
[Navi Hebrew: to bubble or overflow]

B. God gives the prophet the message for the good of His people. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people. (Isaiah 51:16)

C. The biblical emphasis is on the message, not on the messenger. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For 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 Ghost. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

D. Prophecy derives its power from presenting God's message. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

E. Because God is gracious, prophets deliver and protect. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:11)

II. Not All Prophets Are Reliable

A. False prophets exist and they are dangerous. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (Matthew 7:15)

B. God described the problem prophets. 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 with a hot iron; (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

C. Error is a distinguishing and increasing feature of history's leading edge. 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. (1 John 2:18)

D. Prophets which do not come from God do not benefit believers. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:32)

E. Why would God have warned believers about a problem if it did not exist? Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

III. Good and Bad Prophets Are Distinguishable

A. Providence exposes presumptuous prophets. 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: thou shalt not be afraid of him. (Deuteronomy 18:22)

B. Jesus made the test more personal. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (Matthew 7:16)

C. Doctrine has consequences. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (Matthew 7:17-18)

D. God's prophets produce better lives. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees

of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. (Isaiah 61:3)

E. Avoid false prophets. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Matthew 7:19) along with But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

F. Here is the simple rule. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. (Matthew 7:20)

+ Dr. Edwin P. Elliott
Manassas, Virginia