

Seven Signs of a False Prophet!

How would you recognize a false prophet coming at you in sheep's clothing, disguised as a "minister of light" and truth? Here are seven identifying signs to look for, to make sure you are not led astray!

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Herbert W. Armstrong wrote an article in 1939 entitled "Did Christ Reorganize the Church?"

In that powerful article, Herbert Armstrong declared:

“How then did ORGANIZATION and the idea of CHURCH GOVERNMENT get into the Church? It came out of Babylon! Spiritual Babylon -- that is, ROME! . . . Those who are IN, and MEMBERS of such an organized church government . . . are IN BABYLON, and actually worshippers of THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST! And God is calling us, HIS people, OUT OF BABYLON today, before it is too late – before the PLAGUES fall! . . . Our heavenly Father never planted any super-organization, or established any church GOVERNMENT, or set men in AUTHORITY over either spiritual or financial affairs, in the New Testament Church. . . What has split and divided up the saints in the Church of God? Nothing but ORGANIZATION – which has led to politics, ministers lusting for rule and for power . . . God’s Word commands us to COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, and be separate. God's last warning is, ‘COME OUT OF BABYLON!’”

NEVER was this warning more urgent or more important than today!

Jesus Christ foretold that false prophets and teachers would come in the last days, abounding and multiplying like rabbits, so to speak. They seem to be sprouting up like mushrooms everywhere, as if it were, “overnight.” What can we do about them, so that we are not deceived by their wiles or deluded by their charms?

God's Word repeatedly warns, “Beware of false prophets” (Matt.7:15). “Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” (Matt.24:11). “For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets” (v.24). Peter warned, “There shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies” (II Pet.2:1). The apostle John warned, “Many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I John 4:1).

How can you identify a false prophet? What are the characteristics you should look for?

Here are the seven Biblical "signs" that will help you to identify a false teacher or prophet. Study, them, and keep you eyes open, because these servants of Satan the devil are everywhere!

“Signs and Wonders”

Some false prophets use phony miracles, signs and wonders to lead people astray. Jesus Christ warned that in the last days there would be a false “signs and wonders” movement afoot – phony miracles, statues weeping, appearances of “Jesus” or “Mary” in church windows, or false healings. His exact words were, “For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before” (Matt.24:24-25). These “signs” will be very persuasive – and yet totally false and misleading!

God warns us, “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, *Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and serve them;* thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD thy God *proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD thy God with all your heart and with all your soul*” (Deut.13:1-3).

Failed Prophecies

Another sign of a false prophet is the failure of his “inspired” predictions and prophecies. God thunders, “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD [claims to have a divine prophecy from God Himself], *if the thing follow not nor come to pass*, that is the thing which the LORD hath *NOT spoken*, but the prophet hath spoken presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut.18:22).

This is not speaking of “speculation,” or trying to understand various prophetic Scriptures. We can all make mistakes of this kind. Herbert Armstrong, to his shame, was famous for this kind of false interpretation and erroneous understanding. He made many mistakes in understanding Bible prophecy, especially when it came to dates. He thought at one time that Mussolini was the Beast of Revelation, and that Christ would return in the 1940's. Later he believed Christ would return in the year 1975, and even wrote a booklet entitled *1975 in Prophecy!* He made many mistakes – at one time he wrote that men would never set foot on the moon and return to earth alive. When the British fleet sailed for the Falkland Islands, after Argentina had invaded and seized them, he predicted that the British fleet would meet with disaster. He was wrong again!

But even these flagrant errors in understanding, although they proved he was not a true “prophet” of God (which he said he never claimed to be, by the way), did not disprove or invalidate the many GOOD and RIGHT things which he taught, including the Sabbath day, annual Holy Days (as much as he understood them), obedience being required for salvation, and the identity of the lost ten tribes of Israel. These were errors in interpretation, understanding, and wrongly-based speculation, based on false assumptions and led to false conclusions. We are all human, and fallible. He never claimed “infallibility” as the Pope does!

However, *if a prophet or preacher claims divine inspiration for a prophecy, and then it fails to come to pass, then he is proved to be a FALSE PROPHET!*

"Is It Scriptural?"

The apostle Paul commands us to "Prove ALL things" (I Thess.5:21). He declared that "ALL scripture is given by *inspiration of God*" (II Tim.3:16). Jesus Christ tells us, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Therefore, the teachings of God's true servants must conform to Scripture. They must be provable by the Word of God. Any "prophet" or "teacher" who teaches doctrines which do not conform to Scripture – false doctrines – is a FALSE PROPHET! "Thy Word is TRUTH," Jesus declared (John 17:17). He declared further, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Anyone who teaches doctrine contrary to the Word of God is a FALSE PROPHET! This would even include ministers who teach flagrant error regarding the annual holy days of God! This would include those who are mixed up and teach ERROR regarding the Passover and Pentecost, as well as those who compromise with pagan teachings and observe Christmas and Easter and other pagan holidays, claiming they are "Christian"!

This would also include ANY who a false,, unbiblical, polluted, altered CALENDAR than the true Calendar of God's Word! Write for our articles on "God's True Calendar," "What's All This about Postponements?," and "When Does the Year Begin?"

Judge by the Fruits!

Jesus Christ declared: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. *Ye shall know them BY THEIR FRUITS.* Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 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. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore *by their fruits* ye shall KNOW them" (Matt.7:15-20).

The fourth identifying sign, then, is – *look at their fruits!* That which *produces* evil IS evil! Look at the fruits of their teachings, and the fruits of their lives. Do they sow division, strife, carnality? Do they evidence the "fruits of the flesh"? Are they full of envy, deceit, jealousy, vanity, ego? These are not the "fruits" of a true servant of God! Do they preach "humility" but act with "pride"? Do they preach "obedience" but do not themselves obey God's Word? Do they preach God's Law but state that "they are ABOVE the law"? Do they state things like, "I will never bow the knee or submit to *any man*," showing their utter disregard for other men or ministers, even if called of God? Those are the fruits of rebellion – hostility – the carnal mind (see Rom.8:7). Look at their fruits – and be discerning!

What are the "evil" fruits that will become evident with a false prophet? Paul tells us, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication [immorality], uncleanness [filth], lasciviousness [lust, license to do evil – a "permissive" attitude], idolatry

[worship of self, or various and sundry “idols”], witchcraft [magic, potions, drugs, the occult, dealing with wicked spirits and demons], hatred, variance [always seeking to divide, to oppose, to create different opinions or variant teachings], emulations [stealing from others, imitating others, pretenders, mimicking, plagiarizing others], wrath, strife [fighting over words, fighting over virtually everything!], seditions [being traitors, unfaithful, seditious, undermining the truth], heresies, envyings [they envy the righteous], murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal.5:19-21).

The apostle James also discusses “fruit.” He declares, “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation [conduct] his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have *bitter envying and strife* in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. *For where envying and strife is, there is CONFUSION and every evil work.*

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (James 3:11-18).

Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. . . Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt.12:30-36).

When the World Speaks Well of You . . .

Have you ever noticed how the world speaks so well of its own – how society looks up to such men as Billy Graham, the Pope of Rome, and other leading religious figures? Many even praise and adulate the television evangelists, and other charismatic individuals.

But the true servants of God have always been “bad-mouthed” by the world, disrespected, looked upon with reproach, disdain, and even hatred. King Ahab called Elijah his “enemy,” and “he that troubles Israel” (I Kings 18:17). The world laughed at Noah. Pharaoh ignored Moses as long as he could, rejected his demands, and accused him of being a false prophet. Even the people of Israel rebelled against Moses (Num.16) and rejected God's servant (Num.14). Christ Himself was called an impostor, a servant of the devil, and possessed of Beelzebub by His enemies, and called a “false prophet.” So it was prophesied and so it was foretold that it would be.

Jesus declared, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). This is the *fifth sign* of a false prophet: They will be

widely admired and commonly spoken well of by people. They will be “honored” for their appearances, and their “personality,” their charm and charisma, and lauded for their supposed “good works.”

But it is all a sham – a disgrace – because they do not teach or proclaim the pure truth of God’s Word! They compromise; they seek the favour of men; they seek to be admired.

A number of such men try to emulate or imitate Herbert Armstrong, cover up and deny his faults and mistakes, and claim he was the Elijah to come and could teach no wrong. They compete among themselves each one claiming to wear his “mantle” or “cloak,” to be his “legitimate” successor, walking in his footsteps. And if the truth be known, *none of them truly follows in his footsteps!* Why do I say this? Because although it was exceedingly difficult for him, at least a number of times Herbert Armstrong repented, and changed his teachings and doctrines, when he was *proved wrong!*

NONE of those who claim to follow him is willing to follow him in admitting it when wrong, in being open-minded enough to CHECK UP, and LOOK at evidence which might prove them wrong!! NONE of them is willing to CONFESS ERROR when they are TEACHING error!!

Herbert Armstrong, despite all his mistakes, at least was willing to take correction like a man, and admit it when he was proven wrong!

Solomon wrote, “Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov.27:5-6).

Solomon also wrote: “Whoso loveth instruction, loveth also knowledge: *but he that HATETH REPROOF IS BRUTISH*” – a mere brute – an animal! (Prov.12:1).

He added: “A wise man heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke” (Prov.13:1). “A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth. Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge” (Prov.14:6-7).

“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov.29:1). And so it is. And so it shall be.

“Christ IN Us, the Hope of Glory”

False prophets deny that Jesus Christ came into this world as a complete human being – that He divested Himself of His divinity, and became a man like you or I (Heb.2:16-18; 4:15; 5:7-8). He literally “emptied Himself” of His divine rank and power, and became flesh and blood (Phil.2:5-8; John 1:1-3, 14). Most false prophets teach that He was some sort of “super-man,” or “God-man,” and that being God it was impossible for Him to sin! However, the Word of God says that He was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb.4:15). He could have sinned! He had to *resist* temptation!

False prophets also deny that Christ comes into us through the Holy Spirit, living His life IN us (Gal.2:20). They deny that since He is the “same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb.13:8), that He will still observe and obey GOD’S LAW, INCLUDING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS – including observe the weekly Sabbath day and the annual Holy Days of God – today, *in us*, just as He did almost 2,000 years ago, in the flesh! (Luke 2:41-42; John 2:13, 23; Luke 22:8; John 7:8, 14, 37).

Nevertheless, the apostle Paul wrote, “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom.13:14). He wrote, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until *Christ be formed IN you*” (Gal.4:19). Paul asserted that God would “make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col.1:27).

Christ literally lives in His true servants, today! Paul wrote: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth IN me*: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal.2:20).

But what does it really mean, that Christ lives IN us? How does this tell the difference between a true servant of God, and the multitudinous false prophets and false teachers?

The apostle John declared: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ *is come* [Greek, “*is coming*”] in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth *not* that Jesus Christ *is come* [Greek, “*is coming*”] *in the flesh* is not of God: and this is that *spirit of antichrist*, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world” (I John 4:2).

The spirit of “antichrist” denies that Jesus Christ LIVES His life in His true followers! It denies that Jesus Christ, since He is the same forever, will still be obeying God’s laws and keeping His commandments WITHIN EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN, today, even as He did 2,000 years ago!

In other words, God’s Holy Spirit will lead true servants of God to obey God’s law and His commandments, even as Christ obeyed them 2,000 years ago! The Spirit of God confesses and acknowledges this fact! The spirit of false prophets denies this fact!

The Seventh Identifying Sign

Isaiah the prophet was inspired to write, “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits [false prophets have demons that inspired their messages], and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?”

“To the LAW and to the TESTIMONY: if they speak *not* according to THIS WORD, *there is no light in them*” (Isa.8:20).

False prophets and Satan-inspired teachers always seek to lead people *away from the laws and commandments of God!* They teach that the laws of God are abolished, done away, and need not be obeyed any more. They have dreams, or make prophecies, and then seek to lead people *away from obeying God.* This is perhaps the most fundamental “SIGN” of a false prophet and false teacher of them all! They entice people into sin, which is “lawlessness”, breaking one or more of the laws of God – departing from the LAWS of Almighty God! As the apostle John wrote: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION of the LAW” (I John 3:4). The Bible definition of the word “sin” is very simple: Sin is “the transgression of the law.” What law? Why, the Law of God, of course! “Sin,” therefore, is simply “disobedience” of God’s Law!

False prophets, like Satan the devil, their master and guide, HATE God’s Law. They abhor and detest it. They feel “constrained” by it, “limited” by it, as if they were bound up in chains. They feel “restricted” by it, as if they were tied up in a strait-jacket! It “impedes” their life-style, their lusts, interferes with their ambitions and desires. So all together, they claim it is abolished, in one way or another! Some teach parts of it, but disobey whatever they disagree with. They may even give “lip service” to it publicly but disobey it privately, behind closed doors.

But, as God told Moses, He allows us to be “tested” by these false prophets and their seductive messages because “the LORD thy God *proveth you, to KNOW whether ye love the LORD thy God with all your heart and with all your soul*” (Deut.13:3).

Do you love God, and His Law, with your whole being? God says, “Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and *keep his commandments, and OBEY his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him*” (Deut.13:4).

Do you?

If you take these seven signs of false prophets seriously, then you will be able to stand up against, and overcome false prophets who seek to lead you astray! You will be able to stand before the Son of man, Jesus Christ, when He returns! (Luke 21:36).