

False Positives (Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

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What is a Prophet? Literally, the Greek word "*prophetes*" means to fore tell. However, the idea of a prophecy is someone who speaks to God. In the Bible, men spoke to God throughout the Old Testament. Abraham, Moses, Isaiah all spoke to God. In the New Testament, we are told the church was built on the work of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). Are there still prophets? In one sense, all Christians are prophets, having received that most important prophecy in history, the final coming of Christ. However, in a different vein, many people have claimed to speak to God and for God. Men such as Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Ellen White, Charles Russell all claimed to have revelations from God.

When someone purports to speak to and for God, and does not, they are a false prophet. Jesus predicted many false prophets would come (Matthew 24:11), and the Apostles later said many had arisen (2 Peter 2:1, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 John 2:18) The keys to identifying false prophets are given in the book of Deuteronomy, 18:22: "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."

However, this test is not all sufficient, as Moses indicated that there could be a "False Positive" to this test in Deuteronomy 13:1-5. There he revealed that some men might perform works and wonders. They could only be identified as false prophets by their rejection of the truth. Did God do this? In 1 Kings 22:19-23 God permitted a lying spirit to deceive King Ahab through the prophets. Could this still happen today? In 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 Paul warned that God would permit delusion through false teachers (Paul calls them sons of perdition) who could work "wonders". Even today this warning applies.

WHY Would God Permit It? In these passages is the answer. First, it was to determine if we love Him ("God is testing you to find out if you love the Jehovah"). Second, because we do not love the truth ("because they did not receive the love of the truth").

God expects us to trust WHAT IS WRITTEN above what we perceive. God permits deception to test or try us; these tests are not necessarily (or even likely) supernatural, such as recorded in 1 Kings 13:14-24. Today, we deal with "signs and wonders" of ideologies like evolution, which claim to work wonders for their gods. We see it in church digressions like institutionalism & liberalism, which claim that numeric increases are a sign of righteous conduct. These are all false signs.

Conclusion: God expects us to trust what He says. He expects us not to accept things other than Faith (Romans 10:17). We need to know that testing benefits us. Finally, we need to be a mindful Christian, not led by emotion or influence.