

## Prophets and Prophecies

### Prophets and Prophecies, Who Were They and Can We Believe Them

We tend to think of prophecy as a revealing of future events, but in the New Testament we find that the prophetic gift is second only to that of the apostles and is a special form of the teaching gift. In reality, it is a making known of the divine will, and the divine will is that all should humble themselves and receive His Son, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, any prophecy or prophetic teaching should directly or indirectly reveal the person of Jesus Christ. The study of Bible prophecy has fallen into disrepute only when teachers have become involved in peripheral areas such as date setting or rigid predictions of events that go beyond the clear teachings of Scripture, and all at the expense of revealing “the testimony of Jesus.”

**The Prophet Daniel:** Daniel established himself as a true prophet within his own generation. He predicted years before it occurred, that the Medes and Persians would conquer Babylon. Against all odds, it happened. He even predicted that the Persians would dominate the Medes after the kingdom was established. So, by the test of Moses he was recognized as a true prophet and his writings were included in the Hebrew Bible. The illustration of literally fulfilled prophecy, confirmed by history, is only a few of hundreds of examples contained in the Bible. They establish the unique qualifications of a true Biblical Prophet.

Remember first and foremost, John was a prophet claiming to speak directly from and for God. This put him in that special category that required him to pass Moses’ test of a true prophet (Deut. 18:15-18). His very life, therefore, depended on 100% accuracy in all of his predictions.

**The Historical Accuracy of Daniel:** Daniel wrote his book long before this prophecy came to pass; yet here we are, 2500 years later, and it has been fulfilled exactly as he predicted. In fact, his prophecy was so specific that for many years it was fashionable to suggest that an unknown author wrote it long after the four world governments were in place. Skeptics said the reason the prophecies were so accurate was that the writer was merely writing history, not prophecy.

Unfortunately for those skeptics, archaeologists have discovered copies of Daniel’s prophecy dated from well within the period of the 2nd or Medo-Persian kingdom. There is no question today that Daniel’s prophecy was accurate history written in advance. And that, of course, can happen only by divine revelation.

**How to Know a True Prophet:** Naturally, God anticipated what the people would ask about this prophet to whom they were to listen and obey. God said through Moses:

Deut. 18:19-22 “And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him”. “But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My Name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die”. “And you may say in your heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?” 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”.

This teaches us that the true prophet had to predict some things that would take place in his lifetime so that his authenticity could be verified. He had to also be specific enough that man couldn't manipulate his prophecies. But if a prophecy he declared in the name of the Lord did not come true, he was to be executed by stoning, which was commanded by the Law of Moses. The Prophets of Israel were very aware of this test. In the following quote, God confirmed Isaiah as a true Prophet, and at the same time condemned the false prophets whose source was the occult.

“Present your case, the Lord God says. Bring forward your strong arguments, the King of Jacob says. Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; As for the former events, declare what they were, that we may consider them, and know their outcome; Or announce to us what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come afterward, so that we may know that you are Gods; Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together” (Isaiah 41:21-23).

The Lord threw down the gauntlet to these false prophets. His challenge was centered in the taunts, “declare to us what is going to take place,” and “Announce to us what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come afterward, so that we may know you are Gods.” The challenge to these false prophets is for them to predict 100% accurately the things that are coming in the future. Here is the truly startling thing; the Lord declares flatly that if they can make specific predictions without error, then they will prove themselves to be Gods. Why?

Because only God can predict the future in specifics and without error. Even the best of the secular prophets can't boast of an accuracy of more than 60%. Speaking through Isaiah again, the Lord makes this clear. “I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself, And spreading out the earth all alone, causing the omens of boasters to fail, Making fools out of diviners, Causing wise men to draw back, And turning their knowledge into foolishness, Confirming the word of His servant, And performing the purpose of His messengers” (Isaiah 44:24-26).