

## Propheting for Profit, Part 1

1  **Propheting for Profit**

2 PETER 2:1-3, MATTHEW 7:15-16

2  **2 Peter 2:1-3**

► *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. (2 Peter 2:1–3, KJV 1900)*

3  **2 Peter 2:1-3**

► *But there were also false prophets among the people, as there will be false teachers among you also, who will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, thus bringing on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their licentious ways, because of whom the way of truth will be reviled. And in greediness they will exploit you with false words, whose condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. (2 Peter 2:1–3, LEB)*

4  **False prophets have always been a problem**

FALSE PROPHETS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A PROBLEM

5  **Jeremiah 5:31**

► *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?*

6  **Jeremiah 23:9-18**

*Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken in my midst. All my bones tremble. I have become like a drunken man, even like a man over whom wine has passed, because of Yahweh, and because of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers; for the land mourns because of a curse. The pastures of the desert are dry, and their evil has been their way of running, and their power is not right. "For both prophet as well as priest are godless, even in my temple I have found their wickedness," declares Yahweh.*

7  **Jeremiah 23:9-18 (continued)**

*Therefore their way will be to them like the slippery places, they will be pushed in the darkness, and they will fall into it, for I will bring disaster on them in the year of their punishment," declares Yahweh. "Now in the prophets of Samaria I saw a disgusting thing. They prophesied by Baal and they caused my people Israel to err. And in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible. They commit adultery, and they walk in lies, and they make strong the hands of evildoers, so that they have not turned back each from his wickedness. All of them have become to me like Sodom, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.*

8  **Jeremiah 23:9-18**

*Therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts concerning the prophets: "Look, I am going to let them eat wormwood and I will give them water of poison to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem went out ungodliness to all the land." Thus says Yahweh of hosts: "You must not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They are deluding you with visions of their mind, They do not speak from the mouth of Yahweh. They are continually saying to those who disregard the word of Yahweh, 'Peace it will be to you,' and to each one who walks in the stubbornness of his heart they say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.' For who has stood in the council of Yahweh, that he has seen and heard his*

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word? Who has listened attentively to his word and heard it? (Jeremiah 23:9–18, LEB)

9  **Galatians 5:20**

▶ *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,*

10  **Acts 13:6 – Elymas (Bar-Jesus)**

▶ *And when they had crossed over the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain man, a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and wished to hear the word of God. But Elymas the magician (for his name is translated in this way) opposed them, attempting to turn the proconsul away from the faith. (Acts 13:6–8, LEB)*

11  **What are the fruits of false prophets?**12  **The exposure of false teaching**

- ▶ Peter switches from talking about the false prophets of the past (Old Testament times) to the false teachers of the present. Both are guilty of heresy.
- ▶ They secretly introduce their false teachings which are destructive heresies.

13  **What the false teachers brought**

- ▶ *Secretly introduce* translates *pareisaxousin*, “bring in alongside”
- ▶ *Heresies* = Sects, schools of philosophy, religious parties
  - ▶ New Testament writers used it to describe religious parties or sects (e.g., the Sadducees [Acts 5:17] or the Pharisees [Acts 15:5]), or factions probably based on false doctrine.
- ▶ Such heresies are *destructive*, for they lead people away from Christ and thus to spiritual ruin (*apōleias*).

14  **Jeremiah 2:8**

- ▶ They bring doctrines and teachings that do not benefit others.
- ▶ *The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.*

15  **Isaiah 28:7-8**

*And these also stagger because of wine and stagger because of strong drink; priest and prophet stagger because of strong drink; they are confused because of wine. They stagger because of strong drink; they err in vision. They stagger in the rendering of a decision, for all the tables are full of disgusting vomit, with no place left. (Isaiah 28:7–8, LEB)*

- ▶ They gratify the flesh
- ▶ They err in vision
- ▶ They render poor counsel and make bad decisions

16  **Jeremiah 14:13-15**

*Then I said, “Ah, Lord Yahweh, look, the prophets are saying to them, ‘You will not see the sword, and famine will not be yours, but reliable peace I will give to you in this place.’ ” And Yahweh said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them, and I have not commanded them, and I have not spoken to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, and a divination, worthless, and the deceitfulness of their minds.” Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the prophets*

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*who prophecy in my name though I have not sent them, yet they are saying, "Sword and famine will not be in this land." "By the sword and by the famine those prophets will perish. (Jeremiah 14:13–15, LEB)*

- ▶ They lie, they operate in deceit.
- ▶ They bring God's judgment upon themselves and others.

### 17 **Micah 3:5-12**

*Thus says Yahweh concerning the prophets who are leading my people astray, who are biting with their teeth and proclaim, "Peace," but whoever puts nothing into their mouths they declare war against. Therefore it will be as night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. And the sun will set on the prophets, ...*

*Its rulers judge for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money. But they lean on Yahweh, saying, "Is not Yahweh in our midst? Disaster will not come upon us." Therefore on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem will be a heap of rubble, and the temple mount as a high place in a forest. (Micah 3:5–12, LEB)*

- ▶ They offer false promises of peace, but work to hurt those who are not meeting their own selfish desires.
- ▶ They proclaim that the Lord is on their side, but they are themselves not on the Lord's side.

### 18 **Acts 13:8**

- ▶ They turn people away from the truth of God's Word.
- ▶ *But Elymas the magician (for his name is translated in this way) opposed them, attempting to turn the proconsul away from the faith. (Acts 13:8, LEB)*
- ▶

### 19 **Tests for a false prophet**

#### 20 **The difficulty in discernment**

- ▶ If the word of the prophet does not come true, then the prophet is false (Deut. 18:22; cf. Jer. 28:9). Yet this test is helpful only after the fact, not before disaster strikes.
- ▶ False prophets were condemned for dreams (Deut. 13:1–3; Jer. 23:25–38; Ezek. 13:9), but dreams were also acceptable before the closing of the canon of Scripture (Gen. 28:10–22).
- ▶ False prophets engaged in ecstatic activity (1 Kgs. 18:19–40; 22:5–23), but ecstatic prophets were also acceptable as true prophets (1 Sam. 10:9–13).
- ▶ False prophets claimed to have the spirit of the Lord (1 Kgs. 22:24), but so did true prophets (Mic. 3:8; Isa. 61:1).

#### 21 **Deciding factors**

- ▶ False prophets did not attend the council of the Lord (Jer. 23:18)
  - ▶ *For who has stood in the council of Yahweh, that he has seen and heard his word? Who has listened attentively to his word and heard it? (Jeremiah 23:18, LEB)*
- ▶ They were not sent by God (v. 21).
  - ▶ *I have not sent the prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. (Jeremiah 23:21, LEB)*

#### 22 **Deciding factors (continued)**

- ▶ They had their own visions (Jer. 23:16)
  - ▶ *Thus says Yahweh of hosts: "You must not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They are deluding you with visions of their mind, They do not speak from the mouth of Yahweh. (Jeremiah 23:16, LEB)*

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- ▶ They used lying visions and worthless divinations (Mic. 3:7; Ezek. 13:3, 6).
  - ▶ *Then the seers will be disgraced, and those practicing divination will be put to shame. All of them will cover their lips, for there is no reply from God.* (Micah 3:7, LEB)
  - ▶ *Thus says the Lord Yahweh: 'Alas, for the foolish prophets who are going after their own spirit, and they did not see anything!'* (Ezekiel 13:3, LEB)
  - ▶ *They saw falseness and a lying divination, the ones saying, 'Declaration of Yahweh!' and Yahweh did not send them, and they wait for the confirmation of their word.* (Ezekiel 13:6, LEB)

23  **Deciding factors (continued)**

- ▶ They gave the people false confidence, saying that the sword would not come
  - ▶ *Then I said, "Ah, Lord Yahweh, surely you have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'It will be peace for you,' while the sword reaches up to the throat."* (Jeremiah 4:10, LEB)
  - ▶ *And they have treated the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' but there is no peace.* (Jeremiah 6:14, LEB)
  - ▶ *Because, yes, because they led my people astray, saying 'Peace!' And there is not peace. And when anyone builds a flimsy wall, look, they coat it with whitewash.* (Ezekiel 13:10, LEB)

24  **The Old Testament had 2 tests for a prophet**

- ▶ A prophet's words must only point people toward faithfulness to the one true God.
- ▶ A prophet's words must come true.
- ▶ Any prophet who did not fulfill both of these criteria were put to death.
  - ▶ Seems severe, but until there was a written Word for people to check, God took extreme measures to keep Israel on track as the nation was in its foundational stages. (Just like the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira in the early stages of the church in Jerusalem.)

25  **Deuteronomy 13:1-5**

*If a prophet stands up in your midst or a dreamer of dreams and he gives to you a sign or wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes about that he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (those whom you have not known), and let us serve them,' you must not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer, for Yahweh your God is testing you to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all of your heart and with all of your inner self. You shall go after Yahweh your God, and him you shall revere, and his commandment you shall keep, and to his voice you shall listen, and him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast. But that prophet or the dreamer of that dream shall be executed, for he spoke falsely about Yahweh your God, the one bringing you out from the land of Egypt and the one redeeming you from the house of slavery, in order to seduce you from the way that Yahweh your God commanded you to go in it; so in this way you shall purge the evil from your midst.* (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, LEB)

26  **Deuteronomy 18:22**

- ▶ *Whenever what the prophet spoke in the name of Yahweh, the thing does not take place and does not come about, that is the thing that Yahweh has not spoken to him. Presumptuously the prophet spoke it; you shall not fear that prophet."* (Deuteronomy 18:22, LEB)
  - ▶ Do not respect the words of a false prophet.
  - ▶

27  **Jesus' command**

BEWARE FALSE PROPHETS

28  **Matthew 7:15-16**

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▶ *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

29  **2 Corinthians 11:13-15**

▶ *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

30  **1 Peter 5:8-9**

▶ *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

31  **4 Characteristics of false prophets / teachers**

1. They lack divine authority
2. They promise the people peace when God threatens judgment
3. They are serving themselves rather than God
4. They will certainly be judged by God
  - ▶ Each of these applies nicely to the false teachers in 2 Peter.
  - ▶ In particular, they denied divine judgment since they did not foresee the culmination of history with the coming of Jesus Christ.

▶

32  **Question:**

▶ Can a false prophet tell the truth?

33  **Answer: Yes -- Balaam**

- ▶ King of Moab hired Balaam to curse the nation of Israel as they came out of Egypt.
- ▶ But each time Balaam opened his mouth, he BLESSED Israel as the Lord instructed.
- ▶ But he is listed as a false prophet in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:15, Jude 11, Revelation 2:14)

34  **Four Types of Counterfeits**  
**Claiming to**  
**Speak for God**35  **1. False Prophets**

- ▶ In the OT, false prophets flourished during times of apostasy and impending judgment by God.
- ▶ Confusion arose as people held on to their sin.
  - ▶ God sent true prophets to warn of judgment and turn men from sin.
  - ▶ Devil sent false prophets with "I'm OK, you're OK" message and promised blessing.
- ▶ There are many false prophets today.
  - ▶ Preach success principles but let people continue in their sin.
  - ▶ Mark 13:32

36  **2. False teachers**

- ▶ A real problem in churches today.
- ▶ 2 Peter 2:1 – Just as false prophets were in the OT, so will false teachers be today.
- ▶ False teachers gather people around "truth out of balance" (heresy).

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- ▶ Titus 1:10-11 – They often have a pecuniary motivation (\$\$\$) and are “vain talkers” – lots of words without real help.

37  **3. False Christs**

- ▶ Impostor who makes spurious claims about himself and his anointing by God.
- ▶ Can even work “miracles” to deceive others into accepting him as Christ or “God’s messenger for today.”
  - ▶ Preys on desire of people to worship a person as a god.
  - ▶ Message is often inconsistent when examined.
- ▶ Powerful deceivers (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:21-22).

38  **4. False apostles**

- ▶ This person knows he can’t get away with claiming to be Christ.
  - ▶ But he desires the same admiration and so claims to be one of Christ’s chief apostles and claims special revelation.
  - ▶ The Mormons have 12 “apostles.”
- ▶ The Bible lists only 17 apostles
- ▶ 2 Corinthians 11:13-14

39  **True apostles in the bible**

- ▶ Must have seen the resurrected Lord
- ▶ Must be sent by God
- ▶ Must have God confirm their Apostolic calling

40  **17 Apostles**

- 1 ▶ Simon Peter
  - ▶ Andrew
  - ▶ James the son of Zebedee
  - ▶ John—James’ brother
  - ▶ Philip
  - ▶ Bartholomew
  - ▶ Thomas
  - ▶ Matthew
  - ▶ James the son of Alphaeus
- 2 ▶ Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus;
  - ▶ Simon
  - ▶ Matthias (Acts 1:24-26)
  - ▶ Paul
  - ▶ Barnabas (Acts 14:14)
  - ▶ Andronicus (Romans 16:7)
  - ▶ Junia (Romans 16:7)
  - ▶ Jesus (Hebrews 3:1)

41  **What reveals a false prophet? (1)**42  **What reveals a false prophet? (2)**43  **What are the characteristics of deceivers?**

## Propheting for Profit, Part 1

44  **1. They infiltrate churches**

- ▶ They need to be accepted by those they want to teach.
- ▶ They look, act, and speak like a sincere believer.
- ▶ They appear to be meek followers of Christ.
- ▶ *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Matthew 7:15).*

45  **2. They despise authority**

- ▶ They attack the credibility of God-ordained authorities.
- ▶ They make themselves the authority to which people listen and follow.
- ▶ 2 Peter 2:10—*But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

46  **3. They speak eloquently**

- ▶ They tend to possess keen intellect and a great deal of knowledge but use these for deceitful purposes.
- ▶ They are masters of debate and the use of logic to arrive at false conclusions.
- ▶ Jude 16—*These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.*

47  **4. They draw away disciples**

- ▶ Their goal is to attract a following—either to their teachings or to themselves.
- ▶ They are always looking for a moment of opportunity to do this. Some were just waiting for Paul to die to do their evil work (Acts 20:29-31).
  - ▶ *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

48  **5. They ridicule God's standards**

- ▶ God's standards demand holiness. But since people don't like this, false prophets tell people what they want to hear.
- ▶ They approve what God despises and they assure people these things are acceptable.
  - ▶ 2 Timothy 4:3-4—Tell fables that tickle the ear of their listeners.
  - ▶ 2 Peter 2:2—Lead people into destruction while speaking evil of the truth.
  - ▶ Example: Bringing the world into the church in dress, music, and "success" gospel.

49  **6. They are morally corrupt**

- ▶ "A man's morality dictates his theology."
  - ▶ False teachers twist Scripture to justify the corruption of their own lusts.
    - ▶ Do you ever do this?
  - ▶ 2 Peter 2:19—They are in bondage to moral corruption.
  - ▶ Jude 19—They are sensual and do not have the Spirit of God.
  - ▶ 2 Timothy 3:1-5—They have only a form of godliness but do not have the power thereof.

50  **2 Timothy 3:1-5**

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▶ *But know this, that in the last days difficult times will come, for people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, slanderers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, hardhearted, irreconcilable, slanderous, without self-control, savage, with no interest for what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, loving pleasure rather than loving God, maintaining a form of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid these people. (2 Timothy 3:1–5, LEB)*

51  **7. They are void of spiritual power**52  **8. They produce corrupt fruit**

▶ Because they cannot produce good fruit—due to their own corruption—you should do a “fruit check” on teachers to determine the validity of their character.

▶ *You will recognize them by their fruits: they do not gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree is not able to produce bad fruit, nor a bad tree to produce good fruit. Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. As a result, you will recognize them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:16–20, LEB)*

53  **Who is vulnerable to false teachers?**54  **1. The spiritually weak and immature**

▶ Lions, wolves, and other predators pick out the weakest animal in a herd to attack.

▶ False teachers look for the weakest or most spiritually immature members.

▶ They establish friendships with these people.

▶ They then lead these people astray—destroying their walk with the Lord.

▶ 2 Peter 2:14-15—“beguiling unstable souls”

55  **2. Those with unresolved guilt**56  **3. Those who have rejected truth**

▶ Those who have already rejected the Truth of the Gospel have established a pattern that makes it more likely to reject further truth.

▶ 2 Peter 2:20-22

▶ They heard the truth but were not transformed by it; they became entangled again in sin.

▶ They became like the dog returning to its vomit.

▶ 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

▶ Those who reject God’s truth become subject to a “strong delusion” which leads them to further self-destruction.

57  **2 Peter 2:21-22**

▶ *For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment that had been delivered to them. The statement of the true proverb has happened to them, “A dog returns to its own vomit,” and “A sow, after washing herself, returns to wallowing in the mud.” (2 Peter 2:20–22, LEB)*

58  **2 Thessalonians 2:10-12**

▶ *...and with every unrighteous deception against those who are perishing, in place of which they did not accept the love of the truth, so that they would be saved. And because of this, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but delighted in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12, LEB)*





59  **What damage do false teachers do to the cause of Christ?**

60  **How do we respond to false teachers?**

61  **What do we need to do?**

▶ We need to be immersed in the Word of God.

▶ Every day we need to listen to and read the Word of God so that our Spirit can discern between the counterfeit and the truth.

▶ We need to ask God to give us discernment.

▶ We need to ask God to help us remain "open to reason" (a marker of heavenly wisdom) to be open to truths that contradict our preconceived notions.

▶ We need to use the Bible to interpret the Bible.