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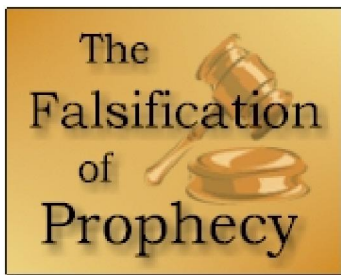
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The Falsification of Prophecy

By Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1979

Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, May 2010

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Today we are beginning to see more prophecy being used and misused, and more falsification than ever before. Prophecy has been a profession for a lot of people for a long time and prophets have been around for a long time, both good prophets and bad prophets, or you might say “true” prophets and “false” prophets. The Bible has as much information about the “false” as about the “true.”

We need to take the matter of prophecy very seriously indeed. I love prophecy. It is in the Bible for our good, and if it is used properly it can accomplish several things that are helpful to us all. We at ASK¹ believe most assuredly that prophecy is important and that it is one of the finest factors of biblical revelation that can be given to mankind.

There are three things that prophecy can do that no other biblical teachings can do. There are several reasons why we all like prophecy. Certainly it reveals things to come, things that are present with us now. It also identifies who the Christ (the Messiah) was, what Christ will be doing for us, and what He has done for us in the past. There have been prophecies given in that past that are past to us now, and they help to prove God. Prophecy has a significant role to fulfill in the biblical revelation and we should be very appreciative of that fact. That is why we at ASK look on prophecy with a great deal of esteem. All of us, as we grow older and as we look at the affairs happening around us in the world today, ought to be very cognizant of prophetic events. In particular we should be watching the Middle East at this time.

Many factors concerning prophecy are very good for our review and our research. Prophecy is the means by which we can currently understand the will of God in our minds, both in an individual sense, but more

¹ Dr. Martin was the Director of the Foundation for Biblical Research at the time he gave this presentation in 1979. I substituted the name Associates for Scriptural Knowledge (ASK), the organization that Dr. Martin began in January 1985. DWS

particularly in a national or international sense. You realize, I am sure, that prophecy affects not just the individual but nations, peoples, even great groups of nations. Obviously individuals make up the nations and we are all affected. In general, prophecy deals with national or international events.

There is a personality in the Bible, the Messiah, that many prophecies focus on. We can then know who Christ was. Prophecy is a very important tool to help us understand what the future will be. Prophecy also does three other things. These are important in the matter of the falsification of prophecy, how prophecy has been erroneously used, and intentionally misused even in our present day. The three points are these. They show how important prophecy can be.

(1) Prophecy can prove that God is God. By that I mean that if the Bible is God's word, as we believe, and if there are prophecies given by God in the Bible, and those prophecies can be proved to have happened or are in the process of happening, it gives us confidence that prophecies which have not occurred will occur when God says they will, in the places where He says.

When these things do happen — and they happen precisely as God says they would — it is a means by which God can prove Himself. You can see the value of prophecy. It helps us prove that God is God.²

(2) Prophecy can prove the men who God selects to do His work, if He gives them prophetic powers and abilities. If they utter prophecies like a Jeremiah, Isaiah, Zechariah, John the Baptist, whoever it might be, if they utter prophecies and they are recorded, and those prophecies come true precisely, this would be a demonstration that God was behind those prophecies. It would help show that those men — or women (it says in Scripture that some women will get prophecies in the future as well). If these men and women are giving prophecies, and the prophecies happen exactly the way they said they would, even when there are great odds against their fulfillment, if they occur, then it gives some credentials to the authority of those men and women.

It would make you believe, or at least give you credence in believing, that the people who were stating these prophecies that came true must have had some kind of divine power, some efficacious power behind them which was able to bring these prophecies to pass.

They can help identify who are the true people of God, who are genuinely inspired by God to understand some of the deep things that He is revealing to mankind because God says He will do nothing on earth unless He first reveals it to His prophets (Amos 3:7; Ephesians 3:5). Such things are very important to help us identify the men and the women who are being used by God to bring His message to mankind.

(3) This is very important. I wish this next point would sink deeply into our minds because the first two points are self evident from my point of view. This third point gives us a key to how we can identify not only who the true prophets of God are, the ones who are really in communion with God, who are inspired of God to help us understand the truth, but we can also know who are the false prophets.

We can know who are the false apostles, who are the ones who are not telling the truth, those who set dates or say when certain things will happen at a particular time. Then if those things do not occur, and especially if prophecy after prophecy are given and hardly any of them, or let us say none of them occur, it is self evident that these people are not speaking in the name of the Eternal God.

They should be considered as false prophets who are not inspired. They certainly could not be considered as giving the Word of God because it says most precisely in the Bible that God does not lie. It is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18).³ I believe that to be true and any rational person should also.

² Eventually at the conclusion of the eons, after every human being is saved, we will be able to look back and see how prophecies have been fulfilled in times before our physical lives, during our lives, and after our lives. God will prove Himself to us not only through our resurrection from the dead, but also through the prophecies that have been precisely fulfilled by God and Christ. God's love will radiate through every instance of fulfillment. Only then will prophecy "fail" in the sense of vanishing away (1 Corinthians 13:8). Only then will prophecy no longer be necessary. *DWS*

This third point shows that prophecy has the advantage of demonstrating who are the false prophets, the religious windbags who claim to represent God, yet their statements do not come to pass. It is a very good way for you and me to see who is true. That is why prophecy can be very important and useful for us. You and I hear all types of people preach these days. You see them on television and hear them on radio. You see them in tent meetings and in various churches. Or you can talk to people privately in your own home. Many people are willing to give prophecies these days.

Do you know how you can show whether those giving prophecies are in true communion with God? If their prophecies come true, fine. That begins to show that there may be some relevance to what they say. That does not necessarily mean they are always people of God even if prophecies come true, because some false prophets were able to give prophecies that came true to a certain extent.

You must take into consideration other factors as well: whether or not they are expressing the commandments of God. Those commandments are love toward God, love toward Christ, love toward humanity, love for neighbors, proper love of self, having a rational mind, and showing the fruits of God's Holy Spirit in their lives. All types of things like this must accompany the prophecies given by modern or past prophets.

All these factors must be put together to determine whether a man or a woman is a true representative of God or whether they might be, as Moffatt expresses it, "a bunch of windbags." If you listen to television or the radio and you hear prophecies given by individuals, if they do not come to pass you can be assured from the biblical revelation that they are false prophets and that they are not representatives of God.

The Bible expects us to use these points to be able to prove or test individuals. But so many people do not want to do this. They have heard people give prophecies where especially the easiest to prove are those who give dates, that something will happen by this time. If something is going to happen by say, 1914, and it did not occur, then you can be assured that those prophets were uttering false prophecies. Say someone would utter a prophecy for 1972 or 1975 and they did not come to pass, then you should have a pretty good demonstration that they are not speaking the truth from the Almighty God.

Suppose someone says that 1982 will be a time of great prophetic significance. If that date passes and nothing happens like they say precisely, then obviously you will know that they are not prophets. By the way there are a number of people saying, keep your eye on 1982. We are not as impressed with that date as lots of others are. Lots of things can happen in 1982. There might be gigantic earthquakes and all types of things, but we at ASK are not called to be prophets. We do not consider ourselves to be prophets.

We do, however, like to be able to relate what Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the others have said and try to put them into a proper time sequence, knowing good and well that we have to rely on what God has given to us. If we misunderstand some of the points, obviously that is no big deal; we are trying to do our best. We know we are getting closer to the end all the time. We have the tendency here, in fact we have the absolute belief that we should be looking more at events that are happening in the world, events that are pretty clear and plain, rather than trying to set dates for particular prophecies to take place.

When people set dates they stick their necks out. It is so easy to show that they are false prophets and not being proper representatives of God when they set dates and the events do not occur. That is one way prophecy can be used to great advantage to show who is not the representatives of God. The Bible said we should adopt these principles of identification to see who have the proper credentials of whether or not they are true representatives of God. Look at what Jeremiah wrote. It is an important Scripture to memorize:

"The prophet which prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that YHWH has truly sent him."

• **Jeremiah 28:9**

[continuing note from previous page]

³ God withholds information, as all parents do, but now everything essential to salvation is known. (Colossians 1:25–29). *DWS*

Suppose the prophecy did not come to pass? It would be a sure sign that YHWH had not sent him, that he is not YHWH's representative? You would think so. Any intelligent person should believe that. We have a Scripture in Deuteronomy given by the first prophet, the first seer, Moses, a great prophet in his own way. He gave a statement that I hope will burn in our ears because it is very helpful to understand how affairs are prophetically relative to individuals giving prophecies. **"When a prophet speaks in the name of YHWH ..."** How many say that the prophecies they are giving are coming from Christ or from God the Father:

"When a prophet speaks in the name of YHWH, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which YHWH has not spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: you shall not be afraid of him."

• **Deuteronomy 18:22**

All types of people have given prophecies and people are afraid of those prophecies. The third point of prophecy is to show who is a true prophet or not. One of the main and easy ways of doing this is to see if prophets are setting dates. The setting of dates, whether it be 1844, 1914, 1936, 1972, 1975, 1982, 1996, why do I give these dates? These dates have been and are still being bandied around as having prophetic significance. Even when they fail, people still say, oh, those dates are still very important.

Date setting is one of the major problems with prophecy today. It is not a problem with God. It is a problem with men and women who have misused prophecies. The major way to bring in the "falsification of prophecy" (the title of this article) is through date setting — any date setting.⁴ Once a person sets a date for particular event to occur, he had better know what he is talking about. Many people do not.

If a minister claims to be a representative or a prophet or an apostle of Jesus Christ, should he pay attention to what Jesus Christ said about date setting? After the resurrection of Christ, on the day He was ascending to heaven, the last thing they asked Christ was this in Acts chapter 1:

"When they [the apostles] therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, 'Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' And he said unto them, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power.'"

• **Acts 1:6-7**

In a clear statement He says to the original apostles having God's Holy Spirit that they will not know the times or the seasons which the Father has placed in His own power.

Turn to Matthew 24:36. Christ said do not set dates. He said not even the angels of heaven know the events connected with Christ's second coming. The angels of heaven have been in existence since before the foundation of this earth. They know when Adam was created, whether it was 6,000 years ago or more. They are intelligent enough to count the number of years since Adam. They know about the 6,000 year period. Do you think the angels should know? Christ says even they do not know when the time periods are.

Angels do not know. The original apostles did not know, but all types of people today think they know when things will occur. Those who are setting dates are violating the very principles that God says about prophecy. He said we do not know.⁵ Date setting is the major problem in the falsification of prophecy. Date setting is the easiest way to tell who are false prophets and who are false teachers. Why is it easy? All one has to do is to wait for their dates to arrive and pass. Again, when their prophecies fail you can know:

"When a prophet speaks in the name of YHWH, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which YHWH has not spoken."

• **Deuteronomy 18:22**

⁴ Dr. Martin is talking about prophetic setting of specific dates. He is not referring to determining dates in the past to consider prophetic fulfillment in the past. Nor is he referring to dealing with numbers of years, times and seasons, in order to see patterns of events and sequences of events. See Dr. Martin's articles "[1998 in Prophecy](#)" and "[Prophetic Trends to A.D. 2005](#)." DWS

⁵ By the way, Ernest Martin does not know exactly when Christ is coming back the second time. Do you know why I do not know? It is because He has not told me, and he has not told anybody else. ELM

If they are not speaking the truth in prophecy, how can they be speaking the truth in doctrine and other things? I am talking not about one man, two men, or ten men. I am talking about all types of people. If you cannot trust them in their prophecies which they dogmatically and arrogantly give, the Bible says that you will know that they are not speaking in the name of the Eternal.

People love to avoid Christ's warning about not setting dates. They go right on and set them. Some enjoy sticking their necks out to be cut off. I hope that false prophets continue setting dates because they will keep on failing and you will begin to know who the false prophets and the false teachers are if you keep your eyes open for these dates to pass.

Ernest L. Martin, 1979
Edited by David Sielaff, April 2010