

WHAT ARE THE MARKS OF A TRUE PROPHET?

God's prophets have not all been the same. While most were men, some were women (2 Kings 22:14). They varied in age from children to the elderly (Jeremiah 1:6; Deuteronomy 34:7). Many of them lived in near poverty though others were prosperous (1 Kings 14:3; Genesis 13:2). Only a few were priests (Ezekiel 1:3, etc.). Among the most famous of the Old Testament prophets was Daniel of the tribe of Judah, a nonpriestly tribe (Hebrews 7:14). The Bible presents no national or ethnic barriers among New Testament prophets (Acts 13:1). While Elijah and Moses designated their successors, it appears other prophets experienced no human selection process. Furthermore, the number of prophets at any given time differed (1 Samuel 10:5; Matthew 3:1-3).

There were several qualifications every prophet had to meet. Any alleged revelations received could not contradict previously recorded Scripture (Isaiah 8:20). God's true prophet was to insist on the existence of only one God. Those "prophets" who taught a plurality of gods were to be rejected and executed (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). Genuine prophets would be able to predict the future with 100% accuracy (Deuteronomy 18:22). No true prophet would involve himself in business schemes (Ezekiel 22:25) or proclaim, "Thus saith the Lord," when the Lord had not spoken (Ezekiel 22:28).

The essence of the prophet's work was that of communicating God's message and will. The prophet received this information "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Hebrews 1:1). Visions and dreams (Numbers 12:6), circumstances (Judges 6:36-40), the Urim and Thummim (Numbers 27:21), and an audible voice (1 Samuel 3:10,11) were some of these "diverse manners." While no true prophet has ever been visited by a God of flesh and bones, since "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18), upon rare occasions prophets such as Moses could behold the SIMILITUDE of the Lord (Numbers 12:6), meaning an immaterial but visible manifestation of Him in bodily form.

As the New Testament drew to a close, completing God's revelation to mankind (John 16:13), the role of the Biblical prophet was fulfilled (Hebrews 1:1,2; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Today the Bible is our all-sufficient source of information (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Today we submit ourselves to only one living Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ. Of Him God has said,

"I will raise them up a Prophet. . .and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. . . whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deuteronomy 18:18,19).

And He it is who said, ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

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