

Kill False Prophets? – Part Two  
February 25, 2012

So, let's find out who these people are and see if you got any of them right on your little quiz.

1. **Emanuel Swedenborg.** Emanuel Swedenborg had kind of a strange psychic ability to somehow know secret facts about people that only a dead relative would know. He claimed to be able to see angels and to be able to interact with spirits of the dead. So he would ask a spirit some piece of information and then he would tell his live relative that piece of information. Of course, everybody thought he was incredible. What he did with the Bible was to basically replace it with a message of love. He said that certain books out of the Bible should be rejected because they lacked the "internal sense" – whatever in the world that meant. So Chronicles, Song of Solomon, Acts, all of the epistles are out of the Bible. So he's speaking as though he's got some special information from God, but he's actually denying the whole rest of the Bible and that means he flunks in my category.
2. **Mary Baker Eddy.** The founder of Christian Science. She writes a guide called *Science and Health*. It's a guide to spiritual living in which she rearranges the Trinity out of the Bible. The Trinity is not so much God the father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, but God the father/mother of everyone and Christ is not Jesus, God's own son, but a spiritual son ship idea and the Holy Spirit is actually divine science. There are all kinds of medical controversies that came about because of the practices of the Christian Scientists. In fact, they were in all kinds of legal hot water where they said that prayer and faith healing alone should account for someone getting better again. So they refused to take medicine and refused to take the right treatments for people who were ill. So today, there are probably 150,000 of these people. In the 1890's though there were 9,000 so they continue to grow in spite of the evidence of some of their failed practices.
3. **Bar-Jesus.** This, of course, is an artist's rendition of a guy named Bar-Jesus. Bar-Jesus was a Jewish sorcerer – figure that – a Jewish sorcerer. That was supposed to be a big no-no for a Jewish person. He is a friend with some of the local authorities in a town called Pathos that Paul visits, and when Paul gets there he confronts him. He says, "You child of the devil. You are going to be struck blind any minute now." And Paul, because he is a true prophet, speaks what actually does become true and instantaneously he is blinded. So there's one of our New Testament false prophet examples.
4. **Fred Flintstone.** I knew everybody would get this one right – timeframe era, prehistoric – not a cult leader or a false prophet – perhaps millions of followers - an obvious trick question.
5. **Jim Jones.** I bet a lot of you got this guy right. I was just a little kid when I found out what Jim Jones did in Guyana at Jonestown. He was a very flashy, charismatic preacher. He had a church following in California and his San Francisco congregation numbered about 5,000 people at the high point of his activity. He thought it would be a good idea to have a society that would

- live together at a compound down in Guyana. As the authorities began confronting him about his practices and the abuses that they saw there, the situation turned very, very ugly. He led all of his followers to drink cyanide laced Kool-Aid so he claimed 918 lives. So here's a person who purports to have some revolutionary new way to get to God or some pipeline to God and everybody believes in him, but he actually winds up bringing death, not life, in his legacy.
6. **Prophet Mohammed.** The Prophet Mohammed – a false prophet – claims to have this encounter with the angel Gabriel, and Gabriel tells him to recite – literally to recite something that has the authority level of scripture itself, but it's totally discontinuous with scripture at that point. So there are contradictions all over the place in terms of the key people and what happened historically. Not only is he leading them away from Yahweh, he's leading them to follow and worship an entirely different idea of who God is. Approximately 1 billion followers today. So when we start to see how numbers of people will follow a false prophet, you begin to understand why God in the Old Testament would be so serious about punishing false prophets among the Israelites.
  7. **L. Ron Hubbard.** He's quoted famously as saying, "You don't get rich by writing science fiction. If you want to get rich, start a religion." So he starts a bogus religion called the Church of Scientology. It's more of a self-help program and a way of kicking addictions than anything else. He has this bazaar whacked out Xenu narrative whereby he thinks that aliens had come to the planet Earth millions of years ago, and there's somehow evidence of these extra-terrestrials here even with us today. In 2008, he might have had 25,000 followers that were a part of Scientology - some famous actors and actresses as I'm sure you know, but nonetheless, highly misleading.
  8. **Sun Myung Moon.** He's the founder, of course, of the Moonies or the Unification church in Korea. He writes a thing called the Divine Principle and he tries to affirm a lot of teachings here and there in the Bible. As you read some of the teachings, you say that some of this actually sounds plausible, but in reality – he takes the heartbeat of Christianity right away from it and creates more of a religion of works. That if people will strive for peace, if people will raise the right kind of families, then Christ will come back. He'll come back only because we have somehow cleaned up the whole world and we're now living in a moral and upright way on planet Earth. It's amazing how many members his church worldwide has – somewhere between 1 and 2 million members. Maybe about 10,000 people in this particular movement in the United States.
  9. **Charles Taze Russell.** Founder of Jehovah Witnesses. Jehovah Witnesses came up with their own translation of the Bible because they felt like the name Jehovah was consistently mistranslated in the Christian Bible. Not only did they do that, but also they came up with all of these other bazaar teachings and practices for how you maintain your good standing in the community of people who believe what Jehovah Witnesses believe. There are 144,000 special Jehovah Witnesses who are going to have a special place in heaven so you work really hard to get out and to be on the streets and to

become what's called a "publisher" so that you might have a shot at being one of those 144,000. It's interesting to read some of the stories of people who have come out of Jehovah Witnesses and this woman in here writes (a book Tim Perry is holding up) that when went back through and found a lot of the teachings of the Jehovah Witnesses, she realized that there were countless examples of prophecies that were given. Specific prophecies that were given that did not come true in any way shape or form. She lists about 30 of them here in her book. Here's one for example: *"In the year 1925, the Jehovah Witnesses believed that there would actually be a resurrection of some of the faith heroes from the Old Testament on earth. Therefore, we may confidently expect (this is in 1920) that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the faithful prophets of old, particularly those named by the Apostle in Hebrews, Chapter 11 to the condition of human perfection."* It's kind of interesting that when 1925 came and went, they changed the dates and kept pushing the dates back. Well, our criterion for the Old Testament false prophet, would have stopped right then and said, "Hey – this is a clear example of false prophecy. What you say is not coming true, you are false – end of discussion."

10. **Joseph Smith.** The founder of Mormonism. Joseph Smith seems to have discovered these golden plates that had hieroglyphic markings on them and he obtains these special pair of glasses and he puts these on and in the privacy of his own study, he is able to translate all of these cryptic document written in Egyptian hieroglyphs – so when he translates it all – it's now a new sudden additional revelation to the Bible – called the Book of Mormon. There are doctrines and covenants and pearl of great price that are added to that. Mormonism struggles because it doesn't have any creditable historicity to its unique message. The things that Mormonism adds to the message of the Bible, can't be historically verified anywhere under the sun. In addition to that it has a drastically flawed view of eschatology as well – a bazaar kind of mishmash of what could possibly happen to you based on how well you lived on earth – whether you wind up in a celestial city or a telestial city. It's amazing that a charismatic leader could envelope so many followers – 14 million followers today. But the criterion that God clearly gives in Deuteronomy 18 would actually stamp Joseph Smith as a false prophet – and we should, too. We should, too, today.

Well, the New Testament signs off with these criteria in a couple of different ways. Yes, if a word is spoken presumptuously from God – it's false prophecy. That continues to be the message throughout the whole of the Bible. If a prophet speaks for somebody other than God and if his message goes off track from what's in the Bible, it's clearly false prophecy. Don't follow it – don't have anything to do with it. Obviously the objective criterion – if a prophet's predictions don't come true, then don't get anywhere near that guy. Paul and Peter would make a couple of very bold statements at the end of the New Testament about false prophecies because these were two of the early evangelists who traveled and took the Gospel all over the place. Everywhere they landed, they were encountering false teachers –

false prophets. Here's what they had to say that helps us solidify what the Bible thinks of false prophecy:

## 2 Corinthians 11

*"I will keep on doing what I am doing (this is Paul talking) in order to cut the ground out from under those who want the opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things that they boast about. (Paul was trying to teach the Gospel of Jesus and false prophets were coming along distorting the message - changing it - trying to talk people into what they were saying and Paul was saying I'm cutting the ground out from underneath you.) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. No wonder for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."*

Wow! Peter is encountering the same problem - the same difficulty as a first century witness to the Gospel of Jesus and he says this:

## 2 Peter 2:1-3

*But there were also false prophets among the people just as there will be false teachers among you (and that applies to us today) and they will secretly introduce destructive heresies even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them - bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*

So this is why God feels so strongly about false prophets. This is why back in Old Testament times - he was absolutely intolerant of their influence among the Israelite community. And it's why the church today should pay attention to what people teach and what they preach - especially if they're claiming that something is from God -especially if they're saying that this is some additional thing that we need to add on to Christianity. Christianity needs nothing else than what Jesus has already accomplished in it and what's been communicated to us through the Christian scriptures.

So sometime this week as you're walking around - as you're hearing and seeing things out there in our world and in our culture - keep your eyes and your ears open for examples of false prophets. They are everywhere. God dealt with them firmly in the Old Testament because of how dangerous they are.

You have a great week and we will see you next week right here at Tough Questions. This has been Tim Perry, pastor of Spiritual Discovery at Christ Community Church.