

The Law of False Prophets (2008)

Dr. Stephen Jones, God's Kingdom Ministries

[Deuteronomy 18:20-22](#) gives us part of the law dealing with prophets who speak presumptuously in the name of the Lord or in the name of other gods. It says in verse 20, "*that prophet shall die.*" Verse 22 gives the added feature, "*if the thing does not come about or come true,*" then we will know that God did not really speak through that prophet.

Deuteronomy 13 is an entire chapter devoted to this subject, and it adds the feature, "*because he has counseled rebellion against the Lord your God.*" Primarily, the concern was about prophets attempting to get people to serve other gods (vs. 2, 13).

I find it interesting that many of the same people who put away God's law are most vociferous about this particular law--along with the law of tithing, of course. Years ago I saw a bumper sticker that read: "God's Law was put away--except for tithing." I suspect that the car owner was trying to make the opposite point and show the foolish contradictions in what many Christians have been taught.

The problem is that when a person rejects any portion of the inspired Word of God, he becomes blind in that particular area. And so, when people reject the law in general, they stop studying it, and if they do look at it, the Holy Spirit does not give them much revelation that would help them to understand it. Those Scriptures, then, become mere words on a page and have no life in them. Of course, that merely "proves" to the person that there is "no life" in the divine law.

In my view, we should take heed to Jesus' words in [Matt. 4:4](#) that we ought to live by EVERY WORD that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Surely that covers the law of Moses, since He was actually quoting from [Deut. 8:3](#). I am also of the opinion that man may study the words of the law, but God does not reveal His mind and the intent of the law unless we are able to accept it as His Word (or reverse our previous opinion that rejected the law). So let us start with [Deut. 13:1](#) and [2](#),

"(1) If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, (2) and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them.'"

Most people are overly focused upon the idea that if a prophetic word does NOT come to pass, then the prophet is a false prophet. They tend to forget verses 1 and 2 above, telling us that *the sign and wonder may indeed come to pass*. Signs were outward confirmations, or tokens, of the word. Wonders were miracles.

So the passage begins by telling us that some prophets or dreamers will come with confirming signs and miracles--and yet their message will be to serve "other gods." Verse 3 continues:

"You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God will all your heart and with all your soul."

In other words, God takes credit for sending such prophets to us and even for making their signs and wonders come to pass. God is a miracle-worker, and He works through false prophets as well as

through true prophets in this regard. The divine purpose is to test us in the area of loving God. To follow God is to obey His will, or to do what He says. This is how it is defined in verse 4,

"You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him."

Perhaps there were prophets in those days who attempted to get the Israelites to follow other gods--that is, the commandments of other gods or religions. If so, they are hardly mentioned in Scripture. By far, the greatest problem was Israel's prophets who prophesied on behalf of the temple or the king. They are all called "prophets." Not until [Matt. 7:15](#) do we read of "false prophets" as such.

A false prophet is not one who prophesies something that fails to come to pass. A false prophet is one who bears false witness when claiming to speak for God. This really comes under the category of the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Yet what shall we say about a prophet whom God sends into our midst, performing signs and miracles, yet teaching lawlessness, or "rebellion" against God's commandments? We cannot say that they are not sent by God, because God takes credit for sending them to us.

It is a test to manifest our hearts. God already knows our hearts, of course. Our hearts deceive ourselves, and such tests are given in order that WE might see and repent (change). In fact, the main purpose of Israel's time of Pentecost in the wilderness was for God to "test" their hearts. As a nation they failed virtually all of these tests, and for this reason they were disqualified from entering the promise. But a remnant passed the tests, for their hearts were right with God.

The main lesson of [Deut. 13](#) is to tell us that the mark of a true prophet is not the signs and wonders--which may even be of God--but rather the issue of lawlessness. Will the people be seduced from God by signs and wonders? Or will they love God more than those signs and wonders? It is a matter of priorities. Signs and wonders are good. Both true and false prophets alike have done them. But the most important factor is their TEACHING, not their miracles.

Many Christians today would cross the sea to observe a miracle, but they would not cross the street to hear the word of the Lord. Miracles excite them; the word bores them. Miracles portray the ACTS of God; the revelation-word shows us His WAYS. [Deut. 13:5](#) continues,

"But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you."

Such a prophet was put to death, NOT because he prophesied something that failed to come to pass, nor even because the signs and wonders failed. He was put to death because of his lawless teaching. Jesus referred to this law when He said in [Matt. 7:22, 23](#),

"(22) Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' (23) And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness' [*anomia*].

Anomia is from the word *nomos*, "law." Lawlessness was the big problem in the Old Testament, and human nature of the "old man" has not changed after the cross. On a personal level, the old man continues to prophesy lawlessness to us inwardly, and it must be put to death, crucified with Christ.

The Apostle Paul had a problem with those practicing lawlessness as well, saying in [Rom. 6:19](#),

"I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness [*anomia*], resulting in further lawlessness [*anomia*], so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification."

John gives us a third witness against lawlessness in [1 John 3:4](#), saying,

"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness [*anomia*]; and sin is lawlessness[*anomia*]."

To be a sinner is to violate the law. To be lawless is to put away the law.

In [Deut. 13](#) God told Israel that He would test them by sending prophets and dreamers to them who would teach rebellion and lawlessness with signs and wonders.

This may seem unfair, but actually it showed the mercy of God. The problem is that we do not know how ignorant we are of the deceit of our own hearts. We are largely ignorant of our ignorance. So God arranges tests by which we may know. Does God do this so that we might stumble? Well, yes and no. It is not done so that we might stumble "forever," nor is it done so that most of humanity might "go to hell." It is done so that we would know ourselves and thereby begin to eliminate the pride inherent in our hearts.

If God did not arrange such tests, it is doubtful that anyone could become an overcomer. These tests provide us all with opportunities to overcome. The tests give opportunity for some to inherit immortal life at the time of the first resurrection, rather than having to wait for a later time. Those who do not overcome will still come into the promises of God, but only at a later time.

If a school gives a test to determine who is eligible for a college education and a better life, it is not being unfair to those who fail the test. We have to look at it as an opportunity for some to rise higher.

We see the same kind of test in a different circumstance. In [Deut. 7:1-5](#) God tells Israel to exterminate the Canaanites in their conquest of the Promised Land. But we also read in [Exodus 23:30](#) that God did not intend to drive out all the Canaanites immediately, but would do so "little by little." For this reason, God warned Israel not to make covenants with them or to adopt their religious practices of burning their children in hell (vs. 31, Jones Opinionated Version).

When this actually played out in history, we find God's purpose in all of this, which could hardly be seen by a simple reading of the law. [Judges 3:1](#) says,

"(1) Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them (that is, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan); (2) only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly."

Then verse 3 lists the nations God was using. Verse 4 continues,

"And they were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses."

This is the setup for the book of Judges. Israel failed the test and began to worship the gods of the Canaanites (vs. 7). This, then, is the reason for all of the captivities in the book of Judges (vs. 8).

So we see from this that when God gives a law, it does not mean that the people understood the MIND of God in this. The law only represented God's *will*. But to know God's *plan* was another matter. The will of God was to eliminate the Canaanites. The plan of God was to keep most of them there, along with their false religious systems and doctrines, in order to test the hearts of the Israelites. It was a case of the vessels of dishonor being used by God to perfect the vessels of honor ([Rom. 9:21](#)).

In other words, God was offering the Israelites an entrance exam to see if they were fit for His College of Overcomers. In those days God was not concerned with the Canaanites, for His plan for the rest of creation was not yet fully understood. If it seems unfair of God to choose some to inherit life before the others, I can only respond as Paul did in [Romans 9:21-23](#). God has a right to do this. The Creator owns what He creates.

Yet we find that God built into His own law the promise to take responsibility for those who fail the test. It is called the law of stumbling blocks in [Lev. 19:14](#),

"You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the Lord."

When God left Canaanites in the land, He was putting an opportunity for stumbling in front of the Israelites. That, after all, is what a test does. It offers opportunity to fail, or stumble, as well as to pass with flying colors. That this law applied particularly to the Israelites is made plain by the fact that God creates blind people ([Ex. 4:11](#)), and He did not yet give Israel eyes to see ([Deut. 29:4](#)).

In other words, Israel was meant to fail, for God could have given them eyes to see and ears to hear at any point in time. One cannot merely point to the fact that they were given the law to know His will. Without eyes to see, it was a virtual impossibility for them to fulfill the law's requirements. It is only when we come to the New Testament that such things become clearer, for then we understand that it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling us that we can begin to know and do His will.

Israel failed because it was God's intention for them to fail. God never intended that the Old Covenant would succeed. He never intended to leave us with animal sacrifices forever. He never intended that we should be dependent upon a physical city of Jerusalem, or a physical temple with an Aaronic priesthood. All of these things were meant to fail in order that they would be temporary teaching tools until that which is perfect should come.

So Paul tells us in [Romans 9:32, 33](#),

"(32) . . . They stumbled over the stumbling stone, (33) just as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." [[Is.28:16](#)]

That "stumbling block," Paul says in [1 Cor. 1:23](#), is "*Christ crucified*." The law of animal sacrifices, given without the understanding that these were only types and shadows, put a stumbling block in front

of the eyes of Israel and Judah. Without God opening their eyes to this truth, how could they see this? Yet God took credit for pouring upon them a spirit of deep sleep ([Is. 29:10](#)) and for putting a stumbling block in front of the people.

Even so, the fact that the law forbids doing this to people shows that God intended to take responsibility for His actions. In effect, the law was prophesying that God was making Himself liable for putting a stumbling block before the people. That simply means that He intends to reverse all the effects of His actions. In fact, not only with Israel, but with the whole world will He do this, for [Rom. 11:32](#) says,

"For God has shut up ALL in disobedience that He might show mercy to all."

God expressed His will in the law by writing the law against stumbling blocks. Then he put a stumbling block in front of Israel and, in fact, He put a veil over all nations ([Is. 25:7](#)). Why? It was in order to make sure we understood the mercy factor built into the law and even *demand*ed by the law, which is the will of God.

Once we begin to understand the mind of God, as well as the difference between the will and the plan of God, we can appreciate the fact that God tests us with "Canaanites" and with lawless prophets who come with signs and wonders. It is not God's intent that we should stumble, but that the overcomers might be brought forth and distinguished among their brethren. Though the majority of mankind fails God's tests, they will not be lost forever.

It is only a matter of Time, for He is not willing that any should perish (be lost), but for all to come to repentance ([2 Pet. 3:9](#)). This is not mere wishful thinking. It is His WILL. The will of God shall always be done, but God has conceived a plan by which His will is delayed by Time. Hence, the difference between His will and His plan is Time.

The idea that God takes credit for sending prophets to the nation to test their hearts by teaching lawlessness is not easy to understand. It really does require an indepth knowledge of the mind of God. Those who do not really know God very well are likely to dismiss this idea. I have found that most people simplify it by attributing such tests to the devil.

But the prophets expound upon it, for this was something that was of great interest and wonder to them as well. As prophets themselves, they had a personal stake in it, for no true prophet wanted to become a vessel of dishonor.

Ezekiel was well aware of the issue and confronted it as well in chapter 14:

" (1) Then some elders of Israel came to me and sat down before me. (2) And the word of the Lord came to me saying, (3) Son of man, these men have set up their idols [*gillul*] in the hearts, and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity. Should I be consulted by them at all?"

Ezekiel's favorite term for "idols" is *gillul*, which means "a log, round, DUNG." Heart idolatry is a preconceived, strong opinion that men believe whether or not God tells them differently. In [Matt. 15](#) Jesus gave a commentary on heart idolatry in terms of "dung," identifying it with the "traditions of men." There He applied it to the disciples' belief that the Canaanite woman was incapable of faith, as I showed in an earlier web log.

God has given us His Word, and any time we reject it or interpret it in a way that is contrary to the mind of God, our opinions and understanding are self-generated dung after we have processed the word. In Ezekiel's case, the elders of Israel had come with "idols in their hearts." These are called "stumbling blocks." We are not told any details about this, but we may presume that these elders had been seduced by the traditions of men or by lawless prophets who had come to them teaching rebellion against the law of God. When they adopted those lawless ideas, they put the stumbling block in front of them and fell over it.

The question posed to Ezekiel is this: "*Should I be consulted by them at all?*" It is a legal question. Do people have the right to inquire of God and expect an answer, if they come with idols in their heart? Whatever their question was, God apparently had already given the answer, but the elders had rejected it.

Ezekiel was primarily a prophet to the rebellious House of Israel, which had just been deported to Assyria ([Ez. 3:15](#)) for its continual violation of the law ([Ez. 3:5](#)). These were the elders who had come to Ezekiel to inquire of the Lord. So [Ez. 14:4](#) gives the legal ruling that clarifies the mind of God concerning this question:

"(4) Therefore speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord God: Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols, (5) in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from Me through all their idols'."

So God affirms that He will indeed speak to such people, but He will give them an answer that will cause them to fall. In other words, it is guaranteed that they will misunderstand the word. When they act upon it, or when they explain it to others, it will cause them to fall. We read further,

"(8) And I shall set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I shall cut him off from among My people. So you will know that I am the Lord. (9) But if the prophet is prevailed upon to speak a word, it is I, the Lord, who have prevailed upon that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. (10) And they will bear the punishment of their iniquity; as the iniquity of the inquirer is, so the iniquity of the prophet will be."

This ruling, of course, calls into question the value, validity, and trustworthiness of a prophetic word--even from a true prophet--if the inquirer's heart is not right. It numbs the mind. This is absolutely astonishing. No one preaches on Ezekiel 14, for it is too frightening. Most are content to stone the "false prophets," without understanding that the rebellious heart of the people is the reason God sends false prophets among them. And even if they inquire of a true prophet, the word they receive will deceive them because of their own heart idolatry. In such cases, they may stone true prophets--as happened regularly in the Old Testament--but God will hold the rebellious people accountable as well.

I have wrestled with this concept for many years, as I have observed prophets and others who simply seek to hear the voice of God. I devoted an entire chapter to this subject in my book, [Hearing God's Voice](#), chapter 2. Only too well do I recall receiving a true word from the Lord in July of 1986 to leave the intercessory organization that God had joined me with in 1981. The word came through 12 people.

But I did not want to hear that word and searched for another word that would contradict it and allow me to stay. I inquired of a prophet, who gave me the word that I wanted to hear, and I acted accordingly.

I did not realize at the time that I was simply following the pattern set by Balaam, who did not like the word of the Lord received on the first mountain, so he went to a second mountain to see if he could get the word he wanted ([Num. 23:13](#)). By the way, Balaam, the classic "false prophet," never seems to have prophesied anything except the true word of the Lord. In fact, his prophecies form part of Scripture in Numbers 23 and 24. The problem was that he was submitted to Balak, king of Moab, and was thus the king's prophet and no longer the Lord's prophet. As such, he sought to prophesy the will of the king, rather than the will of God.

In my disobedience in 1986, God let me go for three years. In His mercy, God put me into "Cursed Time" for 3 x 414 days. Toward the end of that time God arranged circumstances that made me know that there was a serious problem, but I could not figure out what it was, because I had long assumed that I had made the right decision in 1986. So I finally prayed and fasted to know what it was, and at last God revealed the idol in my heart. The revelation came through the same prophet who had answered me according to the idol of my heart earlier.

The idol came crashing down, I resigned from the organization of intercessors, and then my Cursed Time training period ended. So I understand something about heart idolatry and how common the problem is. I know now that God put me through this in order to humble me and make me merciful to others who are going through the same problem. Those who are too willing to cast stones at "false prophets" have not yet had their own heart idolatry revealed to them, and God must still deal with a certain spiritual pride in them before they come to know the mind of God in this matter.

Heart idolatry is primarily a violation of the second commandment about setting up "graven images," that is, counterfeit reproductions of God based upon man's idea of God's word and character. In other words, in order to really understand the law of false prophets, one has to have a working knowledge of the second commandment dealing with graven images. We usually think of graven images as physical idols made of stone or gold, but the Bible is more concerned with heart idolatry and the traditions of men.

In Ezekiel 14 we are given, in effect, a Supreme Court ruling to clarify the law of Moses (i.e., the will of God). The Mosaic legislation was not specific enough to tell us if God would actually speak to those who inquired of Him with idols in their hearts. If someone were to come to me and ask my opinion on a matter, and if I knew that this person had already made up his mind and was only seeking additional confirmation to what he already intended to do, I might tell him to "take a hike," as we say in America.

God is not impressed with people who do that to Him either, and so God chose to clarify this matter to Ezekiel and give him a Supreme Court ruling on it. The ruling said that God would indeed speak to such people, but that He would answer them according to the idols of their heart, so that the answer itself would cause them to stumble and fall.

Such a divine response is obviously a judgment or discipline upon the inquirer. But the law's intent is to correct men through judgment. This judgment in Ezekiel 14 is no different, and so, as [Jer. 2:19](#) tells us,

"*your own wickedness will correct you.*" When the inquirer stumbles, he will learn by hard experience that he must deal with the idols of his heart in order to hear the word of the Lord and know His will. This is the mercy factor. Some learn, some teach others by negative example, but eventually all are corrected at the Great White Throne when every knee bows before Him.

To say more about this would probably not be helpful. It is only as we experience these things personally over a period of time that we can begin to understand how this works. In the 25 years since I began hearing God's voice, I have gone through all of these things. I can only say that I appreciate how God has worked in my life to overthrow idols so that I might hear Him better and without stumbling as often.

Getting back to our study in [Deut. 13](#), we find in verses 9 and 10 that those prophets should be stoned. Yet keep in mind that [Deut. 13](#) was not speaking of prophets whose prophecies failed. This chapter is about prophets whose prophecies may be true and who come with signs and wonders to confirm their word. The penalty is for teaching rebellion and lawlessness while prophesying TRUE things with miraculous signs. This is an aspect of biblical law that few really understand, and if they do, they often do not realize just how strongly God feels about it.

[Deut. 18](#), on the other hand, speaks more specifically of those prophets whose word fails to come to pass. These are called "presumptuous" prophets, and verse 20 says,

"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."

The priests in Jerusalem were too quick to apply this law, and they ended up stoning the true prophets of God as false prophets. Jesus said in [Luke 13:33](#), "*it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.*" This alone should make us cautious today about judging prophets. Paul gives us some very good advice in [1 Cor. 4:5](#) in the context of the Church having to judge its own members. He says,

"Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."

In practice, there are some matters that are best left to God for judgment. Because the law makes provision for appealing to the Divine Court, this ought to be our approach, rather than attempt to pass judgment ourselves. Secondly, in matters where we do have to judge--such as the case in [1 Cor. 5:1](#), where there was incest going on in that Church--judgment should not be rendered "until the Lord comes" into their midst with a revelation-word. That way, it is not really the Church leaders rendering judgment, but God Himself who is working through the leadership.

Of course, once again, this works only if the leaders have been chosen because of their relationship with God, rather than their ability to raise money, or their eloquence, or their ability to do miracles. If the elders are afflicted with heart idolatry, it would not be helpful for them to inquire of God for an answer to the court case. In my view, one of the biggest problems with judgment is the presumption of the judge that he or she has no hidden idols of the heart. By their very nature, heart-idols are hidden from one's view until God reveals them at the time of their overthrow.

When judges know this by experience, they have a level of humility and love that reflects it. They are not so quick to judge anyone, including false prophets. They also recognize the mercy factor inherent in the law, and so they seek to bring repentance in order to avoid the full physical application of the death penalty. Repentance itself is part of the crucifixion of the old man, the death of the flesh. While mortality is the *first* death brought about by Adam's sin, the *second* death, pictured as "fire" in [Rev. 20:14](#), is the death of the carnal mind--a second manner of death that is designed to purify and correct mankind.

As I have shown in earlier studies, King David committed sins worthy of death as well, but his sincere repentance gave God reason to modify his sentence by redefining death. Ultimately, of course, "all have sinned" ([Rom. 3:23](#)), and "the wages of sin is death" ([Rom. 6:23](#)). That means everyone in the world is guilty of death for *every* sin, because all sin is rebellion and idolatry. Yet God in His mercy has given us TIME to repent, even after the sentence of death was upon us. This shows the reluctance of God to impose the death penalty, and we ourselves ought to follow His example, if we claim to have the mind of Christ.

In my book, [Secrets of Time](#), I show how "Cursed Time" is a period of 414 years (or a multiple of 414), between the time of the sinner's sentence to the time that sentence is executed. The interim is a grace period to give the person time to repent. Cursed Time is not applied for every sin, however. It is just one of God's time cycles that seems to have more to do with someone being in a calling that is not his. It makes people responsible (liable) to fulfill a calling that is not theirs and which they cannot possibly fulfill. At least, that has been my own experience, and I see this also in the biblical examples.

If the priestly judges and kings in Jerusalem had been free of heart idolatry, they would have been able to hear the word of the Lord through the Lord's prophets. But their heart idols gave them a contrary opinion and convinced them that the prophets were false. No doubt they felt that the prophet was undermining their God-given authority. Little has changed today, except that in recent years the Church has been restricted from imposing the death penalty, even as was done under the Romans in the first century.

Though the priests in Jerusalem grumbled at this restriction, it was actually an act of God's mercy, because the priests were too quick to judge, and they had too many idols in the heart to be qualified as God's judges. So God hired the Romans to restrict them, even as He has hired Mystery Babylon today to restrict the power of the Church after centuries of their abuse of power. If Jerusalem stoned its thousands, Rome burned and tortured its millions. So while many chafe at Mystery Babylon and its own abuses, keep in mind that our modern rulers are in power because of God's judgment and God's mercy.

In [Matthew 24:23](#) and [24](#) Jesus warned us,

" (23) Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. (24) For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."

On Feb. 22, 2008 I wrote about a prime example earlier of a worldwide announcement on April 25, 1982 with full-page headlines screaming, "The Christ is Now Here." That, I believe, is the best modern

example that we could bring forth. But there have been many christs (or messiahs) in the past. I have a book by Jerry Rabow entitled appropriately, [50 Jewish Messiahs](#). He traces 50 so-called messiahs in Jewish circles over the past 2,000 years.

All of them lived and died. The men who call themselves "Lord Maitreya," today have their own false prophet to announce them. It is Benjamin Creme, their equivalent of John the Baptist. But their idea of a "Christ" has nothing to do with immortality or the resurrection of the dead. They just want people to accept their "christ" as the world-teacher/leader until he dies and his successor is elected to that position. It's just another Christ-dynasty of mortals competing with the Merovingians.

I can guarantee that these wannabe christs would not die for you. They do not love you that much. They expect you to love them enough to die for them. And for this reason, they hate the Cross, because it proved the love of Jesus to be far superior to their own love. To them, the Cross was a case of simple murder, or perhaps someone being willing "to die for the truth."

Jesus did not die merely for the truth. He died for people. False Christs often die for what they believe is the truth. Some might even die for their friends. But none of them would die for their enemies. Paul says in [Rom. 5:6-8](#),

" (6) For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. (8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

But Jesus also warned about "false prophets." This should not be taken as a warning against ALL prophets. I have been amused in the past how many people believe in false prophets, but they do not think that true prophets existed beyond the apostles. Yet we find Agabus in the book of Acts, who is called a prophet ([Acts 21:10](#)). There is no indication that he was a false prophet. He prophesied to Paul that he would be bound at Jerusalem. We also read that Philip had four daughters who were prophetesses ([Acts 21:9](#)).

In [Ephesians 4:11](#) we find that God gave us five distinct ministries to build up the Church, among which were prophets. True and false prophets have always existed side by side. I have met both kinds. But there is a third class of people that cannot be ignored: wannabe prophets. Perhaps they have glamorized the prophetic office and simply want to be one. There are hundreds and perhaps thousands of "two witnesses" stalking the streets of Jerusalem today, hoping to be stoned in order to prove their calling. The Israeli authorities call it "Jerusalem fever." People catch this fever when they get off the plane in the Israeli state.

I have been asked by more than one person to team up with him and become one of the two witnesses. (Don't laugh! It's true!) I have also had my share of charges as a "false prophet." One preacher about ten years ago read my book, [Hearing God's Voice](#), and proceeded to preach four sermons about false prophets with me as the unnamed star of his series. He apparently thought that anyone who hears God's voice is a prophet. And since the last to hear His voice was John, who died about 100 A.D., all others must be "false prophets."

The man believes in many false prophets, but does not think there are any true prophets in the earth today. And he makes the classic mistake of equating the ability to hear God's voice with the prophetic office. They are not the same. Everyone has the potential ability to hear God's voice, and they may even hear clearly if they deal with the problem of heart-idolatry. Of course, since I am a teacher, he first had to christen me a "prophet" so that he could call me a "false prophet."

[Deut. 18:20](#) seems to indicate that the people are to stone "false prophets." The problem is this: Who is to determine if the prophet is true or false? How is this determination made? The only factor we are given is whether or not the prophecy comes to pass. But prophecy is usually a long-term matter, which is why Paul counseled the people to withhold judgment "until the Lord comes" ([1 Cor. 4:5](#)). Biblical history is littered with the bodies of stoned prophets who were honored later when it was discovered that their prophecies were true.

Another matter is that the prophecies of false prophets often come true. We may start with Balaam, whose prophecies form part of Scripture ([Num. 23, 24](#)). If failed prophecy is the only criteria we have to determine true and false prophets, then we may be hard pressed to distinguish between the two. In the New Testament we find the high priest, Caiaphas, prophesying as well. [John 11:49-51](#) says,

" (49) But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all, (50) nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.' (51) Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation."

Caiaphas was not a Christian, yet he prophesied, not of his own initiative, but by the Holy Spirit. Both Balaam and his donkey prophesied, though the donkey prophesied in the unknown tongue (unknown to the donkey). It is doubtful if either were Christians.

Deuteronomy 18 does not use the term "false" prophets. It speaks of *presumptuous* prophets. The Hebrew word is *zuwd*, which means "pride" or "seething with pride." It also carries the idea of being willful. In [Ex. 21:14](#), it is applied to first-degree murder, "*If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor so as to kill him craftily. . .*" In other words, he presumes in his pride that he has a right to murder his neighbor.

If we apply this word, then, to the prophet in question, the implication is that the prophet has a wrong attitude that is based upon pride, or thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think ([Rom. 12:3](#)). Perhaps he is taking upon himself a calling that is not his. Or perhaps he is abusing his calling by using the prophetic gift as a fund raiser (like Balaam did).

The bottom line is that biblical law-enforcement is only as good as the ability of the judges to hear God's voice clearly. A carnally-minded judge may have the law memorized, but when it comes to applying it by the mind of Christ, he is sure to fail much of the time.

So which is worse: a presumptuous prophet, or a presumptuous judge? The practical issue is not so much whether the prophet's words came true or not. It is whether he induces people to worship a false god (or a false christ), as we see in [Deut. 13](#). It is really a matter of the prophet teaching rebellion against God, or lawlessness. No society lives without laws. One either lives by the laws of the biblical God, or one lives by the laws of another god (or man). That is the real underlying issue.

Who is your Covering (2023)

Occasionally, when someone hears that I am in the ministry, they will ask, “Who is your covering?” When I tell them, “Jesus is my covering,” they reply, “And who?”

In other words, they do not think that Jesus’ covering is sufficient. Everyone must be accountable to a man other than Jesus, and this is referred to as a “covering.”

This is, in fact, a primary requirement in most Christian denominations today, which prefer to be ruled by men rather than by God (directly).

King Saul and the Rule of Men

This was well illustrated by the Israelites in the days of Samuel. We read in [1 Sam. 8:5-7](#),

⁵ ... “Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.” ⁶ But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the Lord. ⁷ The Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.”

The fact that God answered the people’s prayer did not mean that God endorsed their rejection of God as their King. In fact, God then told Samuel to give them a warning.

[1 Sam. 8:9](#) says,

⁹ Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure [*mishpat*, “judgment, type of justice”] of the king who will reign over them.

The prophet warns them in verses 11-18 that their king would be a taker, not a giver. He will take their sons and daughters as his servants, he will take their property (through taxes) and give it to his servants, and he will take their tithes to pay his employees. The warning culminates in verses 18, 19,

¹⁸ Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.” ¹⁹ Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us.”

Many Christians fail to apply this to denominations, because they see a king only in political terms. But Saul, who became their king, was also a type of the church in the Pentecostal Age. Saul was a classic Pentecostal type, as Samuel prophesied to Saul in [1 Sam. 10:6](#),

⁶ Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man.

So we see this fulfilled in [1 Sam. 10:10](#),

¹⁰ When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him [Saul]; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them.

In New Testament terms, Saul was a Pentecostal type who foreshadowed the Pentecostal church in Acts 2. His reign started out good, but soon problems arose, and in the end, he was consulting the witch of Endor ([1 Sam. 28:7](#)). This shows the ultimate failure of the Pentecostal church and the need for a Tabernacles church to arise through the house of David, the overcomer.

The point for us now, however, is to say that the people made a very big mistake in desiring to be ruled by God only indirectly. By placing men between themselves and God, they established the pattern of the rule of men that was then duplicated in the Pentecostal Age.

This problem got steadily worse throughout the Middle Ages. Saul reigned 40 years; the Pentecostal Church reigned for 40 Jubilees. And what can one say about what God considers to be witchcraft? Have many Christians once again failed to hear the word of the Lord?

The Root Problem

The root problem is that the people want a man to act as their priest to mediate between them and God. The result is that the people are dependent upon their leaders to hear God and then repeat it to the people.

The result is that the people place their faith in men, rather than in God—and they do not even realize it. The problem remains hidden, because the people think that men’s tradition is the word of God. True faith comes by hearing the word of Christ ([Rom. 10:17](#)); but what sort of faith comes by hearing the word of men?

Christ’s word may indeed come through men, but the actual process is that the people must look beyond the man who is delivering the word. People must hear what the Spirit of God is saying—not what the men are saying. There is no substitute for hearing God’s voice directly and personally.

This problem manifested on that first day of Pentecost at the conclusion of the Ten Commandments in [Exodus 20:19](#),

¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself, and we will listen, but let not God speak to us, or we will die.”

God says that this means they have rejected God, although it is likely that few people in Samuel’s day would have agreed with that assessment.

The five-fold ministry in [Eph. 4:11](#) does not include a priesthood. These “*gifts*” were given “*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service*” ([Eph. 4:12](#)). They were not imposed to enslave the church by a hierarchy of takers.

Comparing Saul and David

Having said that, let us also compare Saul and David. Both ruled in Christ’s throne, but their reigns differed in quality. Saul ruled by his own will. He thought that the anointing meant that God would rubber stamp all of his decisions just because he was genuinely called by God.

David, on the other hand, asked himself, “What would God do?” His reign, though not perfect, was based on the will of God. He sought to reign and judge according to the mind of God, while Saul sought God’s approval for his own policies and decisions.

David saw himself as a trustee of God’s throne; therefore, he prayed to know God’s will, so that he would know what to do and how to do it. Saul thought that the throne was his own and that God therefore would assist him through prayer to accomplish things according to his own will.

The spirit of witchcraft is far more than being a medium. Our own soulish mind can act as a medium, even if we are not particularly psychic. It has to do with the origin of one’s perceived revelation. Does it originate in one’s soul or in one’s spirit? Does the soul tell the spirit what to do, or does the spirit tell the soul what to do? What is supreme? Is it the will of God coming from our spirit, or the will of man coming from our soul?

When Christian believers do not understand the difference, they can easily be led into the spirit of witchcraft, which consults the mortal soul rather than the spirit that has been filled with the Holy Spirit.

So even though both Saul and David ruled as men from the same throne in Israel, their governments were different. David’s government recognized God as the King of Kings according to the First Commandment. Saul’s government gave lip service to the First Commandment but did not truly believe the sovereignty of God.

So Saul became the covering for most of the Israelites of his day. The people therefore were in submission to men, rather than to God. Most would hotly contest this, saying, “No, God said to submit to men as to God.” Yet they do not realize that we are to submit to men only insofar as those men are submitted to God. Whenever men contradict the word of God, we are to obey God rather than man, following the practice of the apostles in [Acts 4:18-20](#),

18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.

The disciples were given the Great Commission in [Matt. 28:19, 20](#) to teach all nations. Jesus said in [Acts 1:8](#), “*You are My witnesses.*” When witnesses were adjured by a higher authority to speak the truth, it was a sin to refuse to speak ([Lev. 5:1](#)). There is no fifth amendment in the law of God. (But if they refuse, they are to be judged by God, not by men.)

During the Middle Ages—especially during the time of the Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834), countless people were tortured and killed for believing and teaching something not approved by the Vatican. Some of these, of course, were teaching alternate traditions of men, but many of them were teaching Scriptural truth as led by the Spirit.

This persecution was foreshadowed by Saul’s persecution of David. What Saul did, the church copied.

Submitting to Authority

In the law we see both man's covering and God's covering. The problem is not man's covering per se; the problem comes when men exercise the authority independent of God, instead of seeing that all authority is under God. So Paul tells us in [Rom. 13:1-4](#),

¹ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except [*ei me*, "if not"] from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good...

This has long been used to justify persecution for obeying God rather than men. What if Peter and John had submitted to the command of the Sanhedrin and refused to testify as witnesses of what they had seen and heard?

In fact, if Paul had submitted to the command of Nero, he could have avoided martyrdom. If Daniel's three friends had submitted to the command of Nebuchadnezzar in [Daniel 3:4, 5](#) to worship the golden image, would God have commended them? Obviously not.

It is clear that men have misunderstood Paul's words in Romans 13. We recognize that "*there is no authority if not from God.*" That authority is to be used to enforce the laws of God according to the mind of Christ. "*If not,*" then "*there is no authority*" that we must submit to.

Paul's entire thesis is based on this caveat. He was speaking about godly rulers who exhibited "*good behavior*" and "*the ordinance of God.*" When Paul faced Nero, he refused to offer sacrifice to the emperor or to recognize him as a god. Did Paul do wrong? Did he die for disobeying God? Was Nero "*a minister of God to you for good?*"

Here we may recall the legitimate authority of King Saul, who had been anointed by God. Even David respected that authority, refusing to kill "*the Lord's anointed*" (Saul) when the opportunity presented itself ([1 Sam. 24:6, 10](#)). But this did not mean that David had to come to Saul and submit to his authority so that Saul could kill his potential rival.

To discern what to do in such cases is a matter of hearing God's voice. One must know God's purpose for each of the ungodly kings. One must see through God's eyes and put on the mind of Christ. There are times to submit to men; and there are times where men overstep their authority by telling us to sin or to remain silent when God has adjured us to testify what we have seen and heard ([Lev. 5:1](#)).

There are often hidden circumstances that must be taken into consideration when applying this law of submission. For example, when God pronounced judgment against Jerusalem in [Jer. 27:4-6](#), He expected them to submit to the king of Babylon. In Jesus' day, the people were expected to submit to the emperor of Rome, which was the fourth kingdom in Daniel's prophecy. But this did not include the command to worship the emperors as gods.

In the past century, on account of the church's sin, God has again judged us by placing us under the authority of Mystery Babylon. While this has put us in captivity, it was necessary to submit to the judgment of God until Babylon's time expired. We know that He is now working to set us free from this captivity, and that we are not called to set ourselves free through any sort of violent revolution.

We must know these principles in order to discern how to live in Babylon while in captivity. (Jeremiah's letter to the captives in Babylon is found in [Jeremiah 29:1-7](#).) This instruction applies unless the king commands us to sin.

In the past century, Mystery Babylon has given us many opportunities to sin, but few have been forced to commit the sin of aborticide. No one is forced to pray without ceasing. No one is forced to become transgender. Yet because Babylon's time expired in October of 2017, we now see them crossing the line by commanding us to cease teaching certain Scriptures or to testify what we have seen and heard as His witnesses.

This, in fact, is evidence that Babylon will soon fall, not at our hands but at the hands of God Himself.

Godly Covering

Biblical authority begins with the family in the Fifth Commandment. [Exodus 20:12](#) says,

¹² Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

Paul confirms this in [Eph. 6:1-3](#), but in the next verse he adds,

⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Hence, even here we see that parental authority is in turn under the command of God Himself and is not unlimited.

The father in the family was normally the legal guardian, whose responsibility it was to judge family disputes and to protect the innocent from being victimized. If a dispute broke out with the member of another family, it was the responsibility of both guardians to seek justice in order to restore the loss of the victim.

If they could not come to an agreement, then they had the option of taking it to a judge. If a judge found the case too difficult, he could take it to Moses ([Deut. 1:17](#)). Moses was a type of Christ, so we today would take it to Jesus.

The guardian was known as the kinsman redeemer, usually mistranslated as the Avenger of Blood ([Deut. 19:6](#)). The word translated "avenger" is *ga'al*, "redeemer." The word translated "blood" is *dam*, which in this case refers to one's bloodline—that is, a kinsman.

His job was not to take vengeance, for [Deut. 32:35, 36](#) says, "*Vengeance is Mine, and retribution... for the Lord will vindicate His people.*" Paul refers to this in [Rom. 12:18-21](#). The kinsman redeemer was responsible to seek the path of peace. If none could be found, he was not to take matters into his own

hands but was to appeal to the judge. The judge, in turn, was responsible to judge the case according to the law of God and to discern with the mind of Christ.

It was the responsibility of the guardian to “cover” his family by his authority. But there were some people who had no such guardian. What of them?

Those Without a Guardian

Due to various circumstances, many people have been without a guardian to take up their cause when they are oppressed and mistreated. [Exodus 22:21-24](#) says,

²¹ You shall not wrong a stranger [gar] or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. ²² You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. ²³ If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; ²⁴ and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Strangers (foreigners), widows, and orphans all have one thing in common—they lack a guardian to cover them and protect them from injustice. In such cases, God Himself will take upon Himself the role of Kinsman-Redeemer if they appeal to Him.

We know that Jesus Christ is our great Kinsman-Redeemer. God is known as Yahweh ([Exodus 6:2](#)). Yahweh was Yeshua (Jesus) in His pre-incarnate form, for the prophet tells us in [Isaiah 12:2](#) (literal translation),

² Behold, God is My Yeshua, I will trust and not be afraid, for Yah Yahweh is my strength and song, and He has become my Yeshua.

We see, then, that the law does not tell the strangers, widows, and orphans to seek some man’s covering. He simply makes Himself available as their covering.

Such was the case for David, for his own parents were forced to renounce him to avoid the wrath of Saul. So David wrote in [Psalm 27:8-10](#),

⁸ When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You, “Your face, O Lord, I shall seek.” ⁹ Do not hide Your face from me, do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. ¹⁰ For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me up.

When David’s parents renounced him as their son, he became an orphan. On those grounds, he appealed to God, and the Lord answered according to His word in [Exodus 22:23](#), “*I will surely hear his cry.*”

Not too long after this, Saul was killed in battle while fighting the Philistines. God said in [Exodus 22:24](#), “*I will kill you with the sword,*” and this literally happened. We read in [1 Sam. 31:4](#),

⁴ Then Saul said to his armor bearer, “Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised will come and pierce me through and make sport of me.” But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it.

We see, then, how David did not need a guardian among men, nor did he seek man's covering. He saw that he had been orphaned, and he knew that this gave him the right to appeal to God as his covering. That is what he meant when he sought God's face.

We know from [2 Cor. 3:18](#) that we are transfigured by seeking His face. This does not necessarily require us to renounce all of men's coverings. It depends on the men and their relationship with Christ. If they have the spirit of Saul, then their covering could be a hindrance. If they have the spirit of David, it may not be a hindrance. But it is clear that men's covering can be a problem, and in the end, we should seek to be covered by Jesus Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer.

Coverings are for minors. Parents cover their children in order to protect them and care for them. Children remain under the authority of their parents until they come of age. Of course, this does not address the problem of abusive parents who do not know how to fulfill their responsibilities properly. Our present study is designed to instruct parents in the exercise of authority ([Eph. 6:4](#)), as well as children in learning to submit to proper authority ([Eph. 6:1](#)).

All authority must be subject to love, and our definition of love must imitate the nature of the God of love. Our ability to love is only as great as our revelation of God's nature.

Levels of Application

The most basic level is the individual, where the soul must submit to the spirit, which is, in turn, in submission to the Holy Spirit. The soul seeks dominance, but the soul is what Paul calls "the old man," that is, one's fleshly identity. That old man is mortal (death-ridden) and demands the right to sin. The spirit, however, is the identity of "the new man" that is perfect and has the right to rule.

If parents have changed their identity from the old man to the new, being led by the spirit (and the Holy Spirit), then they will exercise their authority responsibly in the family. Children must be trained to follow their example as they mature, because the goal is not to keep them under parental authority but to make them independent.

In a church setting, the same principle holds true. A local church carries the same parental responsibility, only on a broader level, to bring the people to spiritual maturity. The church is responsible to train the people to hear God's voice for themselves, so that they can become independent of the religious leaders—who, supposedly, hear God's voice.

Just as parents may abuse their authority, so also may the church abuse its authority. This usually starts with leaders who are given authority without first having the ability to hear God's voice and be led by the Spirit. They are chosen on the basis of their talent in preaching or fundraising. Such people cannot hope to teach the people to hear God for themselves—nor would they want to do so. After all, when people begin to hear God for themselves, it is inevitable that their revelation will, at some point, differ from the leaders' revelation. Disputes then replace discussions, and because they do not know how to resolve these problems, there are many church splits.

This is why the early church decided to formulate creeds which could not be disputed by the people. Creeds limited the people's right to hear God in those areas. As the creeds multiplied, the people's rights diminished accordingly.

The result was that the people were expected to remain under authority forever, and this made them perpetual minors. The goal then was to find ways to ensure that they remain as spiritual babies, helpless and dependent, so that they would never think for themselves.

So the church hierarchy sought permanent authority by keeping the people ignorant and dependent upon church membership to ensure salvation. In other words, the church seeks to cover the people perpetually. This is an abuse of authority and responsibility.

Minors are Slaves

Paul tells us in [Gal. 4:1-5](#),

¹ Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave, although he is owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. ³ So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Note that minors are slaves, even if they are destined to inherit the father's estate. But their slavery is supposed to end when the minor reaches the age of maturity.

Paul applied this principle on a grand level where the Old Covenant was replaced by the New Covenant. The era of the Old Covenant was a time of training under guardians. The training might be rigorous and even include discipline when necessary. This was not a bad thing, but neither was it to be permanent.

In my own experience, God put me in a 12-year time of training from 1981-1993 where I was "*under the law*." Looking back on that time, I wouldn't trade it for the world, but I was thankful that it ended. I know what it means to be a slave, and so I can empathize with other slaves.

Yet I have also learned a great deal about what it means to be a son. It is about learning how to exercise authority with an equal level of responsibility and accountability.

Priests and Prophets

There are some who are the Lord's prophets and others who are church prophets. Still others are the king's prophets. It all depends on who is the prophet's covering. We read about all of these in Scripture, beginning with the story of Samuel.

[Acts 3:24](#) reads,

²⁴ And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.

Samuel was not the first prophet, but he was first to hold the distinct office of a prophet after it was separated from the priesthood. Prior to Samuel, the high priest also held the office of prophet, and for this reason he carried the Urim and Thummim in the breastplate.

However, in the days of Eli and his corrupt sons, the office of prophet was taken from him and given its own special office that was independent of the priesthood. This division began to be reunited when Christ came as our great High Priest, Prophet and King.

Recall that the Birthright was divided among Jacob's 12 sons in Genesis 49. Judah received the Dominion Mandate, Joseph received the Fruitfulness Mandate, and Levi received the priesthood.

Levi's priesthood included the prophetic office until the time of Eli when there was a further division. Jesus' first coming reunited the Dominion Mandate ("king") with the Priesthood, re-instituting the Melchizedek Priesthood (King-Priest). This reunification also included the office of Prophet.

Eli's Disqualification

Samuel's mother had prayed for a son, and her prayer was answered. So when he was weaned—i.e., when he was five years old—she brought him to the temple, where he was raised by Eli and his household. Being adopted by Eli, Samuel became a priest, though he was already descended from Kohath, the son of Levi ([1 Chron. 6:18-28](#)). [1 Sam. 2:18](#) says,

¹⁸ Now Samuel was ministering before the Lord, as a boy wearing a linen ephod.

Eli's own sons were corrupt ([1 Sam. 2:12](#)), and Eli was *unable* to correct them and *unwilling* to remove them from the priesthood. Finally, "a man of God came to Eli" ([1 Sam. 2:27](#)) and rebuked him, prophesying in verse 31 (KJV),

³¹ Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm [*zeroah*], and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

The term *zeroah* is usually translated "arm" in the KJV, but it is actually derived from *zera*, "seed." The word thus has a double meaning. Eli's seed would be cut off, because his sons were to be killed ([1 Sam. 2:34](#)), but in a figurative way, Eli's arm was to be cut off.

An Aaronic high priest did not qualify for that position if he had a physical defect. [Lev. 21:17-19](#) says,

¹⁷ Speak to Aaron, saying, "No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the food of his God. ¹⁸ For no one who has a defect shall approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured face, or any deformed limb, ¹⁹ or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand.

Certainly, a one-armed man did not qualify as a high priest. Eli's physical arm was never cut off, but his seed (sons) were killed. Spiritually speaking, his arm was cut off, and this disqualified him.

Yet more than that, the prophetic office was cut off from him. An arm is one's strength or calling. Eli had two arms, which represented the priesthood and the prophetic office.

The Ark of Strength

When Eli and his sons were killed to fulfill the word of the Lord, "*the Ark of God was taken*" ([1 Sam. 4:11](#)). Later, we read in [Psalm 78:59-61](#),

⁵⁹ When God heard, He was filled with wrath and greatly abhorred Israel; ⁶⁰ so that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, the tent which He had pitched among men, ⁶¹ and gave up His strength [oze] to captivity and His glory into the hand of the adversary.

The Ark is called God's "strength." The Hebrew word *oze* is synonymous with *zeroah*, "arm," which also refers to one's strength. So while Eli lost his strength by losing his sons, God is said to have lost His strength, "the Ark." This is a veiled reference to the death of His Son, Jesus Christ, in whom was the glory of God.

The Faithful Priest Raised Up

One of the "arms" (offices, callings) held by the high priest was cut off, and this office was passed to Samuel. So we read in [1 Sam. 2:35](#),

³⁵ But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed [Messiah] always.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate "*faithful priest*" in the prophecy. But in that "*he will walk before My Messiah always*," we see that there is another layer of meaning.

The first faithful priest was Samuel, who lived a righteous life "before" (i.e., in the presence of) Christ always. Yet he was also known widely as a prophet. [1 Sam. 3:20](#) says,

²⁰ All Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord.

Josephus tells us that Samuel was 12 years old when he began to prophesy (*Antiquities of the Jews*, V, x, 4). I suspect that Eli knew that Samuel was to replace his own sons, for the man of God had told him that his natural sons would die in the same day ([1 Sam. 2:34](#)). But the prophecy said nothing of Eli's own death, so perhaps he assumed that if the word was fulfilled, Samuel would simply replace him. We are not told in Scripture.

As it turned out, Eli's sons were indeed killed in a battle with the Philistines ([1 Sam. 4:11](#)), and Eli himself fell backward and broke his neck and died ([1 Sam. 4:18](#)). The Ark was taken and put in the temple of Dagon for seven months. Then it was returned, but it was never again placed at Shiloh, for that priestly community was destroyed, as [Psalm 78:64](#) tells us.

The Ark was taken to Kiriath-jearim, where it remained for 20 years ([1 Sam. 7:2](#)) under the care of Eleazar, the son of Abinadab. Yet the high priest priestly office remained with the house of Eli for two more generations in the town of Nob.

On the day that Eli and his sons died, Eli's grandson, Ichabod, was born ([1 Sam. 4:21](#)). Obviously, he was too young to take the priesthood, but his older brother named Ahitub replaced Eli ([1 Sam. 14:3](#)). Ahitub was the son of Eli's son Phinehas. Josephus tells us that Ahitub's son was Abiathar, who was the high priest during the time of David. In the end, Abiathar was disloyal to David and was replaced by Zadok, a type of Melchizedek.

The prophecy of the man of God was fulfilled over a period of centuries, and it had many layers of fulfillment. Samuel was the foremost faithful (high) priest, representing a type of Christ who would take that office later. But meanwhile, Ahitub became the high priest, which then passed to his son, Ahijah.

Both Ahijah and Abiathar were said to be grandsons of Eli, so it seems that they were brothers. Yet the prophecy was against the house of Eli, so in the end, his house ended with Abiathar ([1 Kings 2:27](#)).

Eli himself represented a new dynasty of high priests, being of the family of Ithamar. Prior to Eli's ascension, the high priests had come from Eleazar, Aaron's oldest son. The Ithamar priests ruled from Eli to Abiathar, after which time Solomon replaced Abiathar with Zadok, who was from the house of Eleazar.

This change of priesthood foreshadowed a greater change when the Aaronic order itself would be replaced by the Order of Melchizedek ([Heb. 6:20](#)). Hence, this change of priesthood in the New Testament was embedded in the prophecy against the house of Eli.

Spiritual Beggars

The man of God concluded his prophecy in [1 Sam. 2:36](#),

³⁶ Everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and say, "Please assign me to one of the priest's offices so that I may eat a piece of bread."

Having lost the "arm" of the prophetic office, those who remain in the house of Eli are said to desire "*one of the priest's offices*" in order to gain financial support. What office were they to seek? Obviously, it was the office that was lost when the Ark of God was taken from Shiloh.

The Ark was the "oracle" of God, for God spoke from the mercy seat covering the Ark. It represented the prophetic office. The house of Eli wanted their arm back, but the corruption ran deep. The prophecy of the man of God implied that their motives were flawed.

In desiring payment ("silver") or sustenance ("a loaf of bread") for their services, there is a suggestion that prophets of the spiritual house of Eli follow the way of Balaam, who desired riches in exchange for his prophecy. Hence, some prophets even today use their prophetic gift to make a profit, and they never fail to beg for money. It seems to me that the prophecy of the man of God warns all prophets to learn the ways of Samuel and to forsake the ways of Eli and his sons.

What way is that? There were two sins in particular that are attributed to the priesthood of Eli—which includes their prophetic office. The first is found in [1 Sam. 2:22](#),

²² Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting.

Secondly, they were stealing the offerings ([1 Sam. 2:12-17](#)) and taking offerings "by force." Offerings were certainly to be used to support the priests, but this passage suggests the use of fraud.

In other words, the priesthood of Eli broadly represents theft and immoral behavior. No doubt this is just a glimpse of the overall problem. I do not want to be too specific here, nor do I want to accuse anyone in particular; however, this is sufficient to set forth the problem, whereby we may know the difference between the house of Eli, the corrupt priests, and the house of Zadok, whose name means “righteous.”

The King’s Prophets

King Ahab had 400 prophets at his disposal. These were under Ahab’s authority and covering. They were supported by the king, and so they were expected to prophesy things that agreed with the views of the king.

When King Jehoshaphat of Judah made an alliance with King Ahab of Israel to fight against the Syrians, they first inquired of the Lord. Ahab’s 400 prophets prophesied: “*Go up and succeed, for they will be given into your hand*” ([2 Chron. 18:14](#)). But Jehoshaphat said, “*Is there not yet a prophet of the Lord here that we may inquire of him?*” ([2 Chron. 18:6](#)).

Here we see a clear distinction between the king’s prophets and the Lord’s prophets. The difference is their covering. The Lord’s prophets are covered by God Himself; the king’s prophets are covered by the king.

When the office of the prophet was separated from the priesthood, we soon find that God normally would call His prophets and personally train them in the wilderness. This was the hard way, but it was very effective, and they learned obedience and loyalty to the word of God, regardless of the cost.

The king’s prophets went with the flow of the culture and politics of their day. No one dared prophesy anything that displeased the king, lest they should lose their job.

Church Prophets

Church prophets are often similar to the king’s prophets in that they are submitted to the church leaders first and to God second. The office of a prophet was separated from the priesthood (church) on account of priestly corruption.

God demands loyalty to Himself above loyalty to the church or to any man. That is why so often He trains prophets in the wilderness.

For example, let us say that a pastor/priest thinks that to build the church they ought to buy a bigger building. But let us say that a prophet receives a word that this is not what God meant by building the church. Suppose the pastor becomes indignant and reprimands the prophet for having a contradictory word.

The prophet then is faced with the choice of being a church prophet or the Lord’s prophet.

When we speak of “false” prophets, it does not mean that their prophecies are false, but rather that they are false to Christ. Balaam prophesied truth, and his prophecies form part of Scripture in Numbers 22-24. Yet God was displeased with him.

[2 Peter 2:15](#) says,

¹⁵ forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

Balaam is never called a “false” prophet. He had a genuine prophetic gift that was used to make money. So also, he counseled Balak, king of Midian, to put a stumbling block in front of the Israelites, so that they would fall into the sin of immorality. [Jude 11](#) calls this “*the error of Balaam.*”

[Rev. 2:14](#) condemns those who “*hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.*”

There are prophets today who teach Christians to violate some of the laws of God, as if the law is no longer in force today. Inevitably, this leads to immorality according to the biblical standard of God’s nature. Those who remain under the covering of such prophets (or priests) often find that they fall into the same trap of lawlessness, for whoever is our covering becomes our standard of moral behavior.

<https://godskingdom.org/studies/books/christian-zionism-how-deceived-can-you-get/>