

Prophets in Mormonism Part 9

by Marvin W. Cowan

Mormon Apostle, Bruce R. McConkie said,

The mere claim on the part of professing religionists that they have the testimony of Jesus does not of itself guarantee or prove that they do in fact have the spirit of prophecy so as to be true prophets. Rather, truth seekers are commanded: "*Believe not every spirit, but try (test) the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1)... A person claiming to be a true spiritual leader might present such a good imitation of a true prophet as to deceive those who do not themselves have the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit....In this day and age true prophets will be members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (*Mormon Doctrine*, pages 607-608)

It is certainly true that many false prophets have been and still are in the world. It is also true that false prophets can "present such a good imitation of a true prophet" that they can deceive many as Jesus warned in Matthew 24:11. That includes Mormons as well as others. LDS leaders claim true prophets will be members of the Mormon Church, but that cannot be supported by the Bible. So, *how* can one "test the spirits" to determine if someone is a true prophet? The Bible does not say that we will see a halo or something around a true prophet. Nor does it say if we get a *good feeling* about him that he is a true prophet. But it says that a prophet's *prophecy must come to pass* or he is a false prophet (Deut. 18:22).

Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith, claimed to be a prophet and many of his prophecies have been "canonized" as LDS scripture in the *Doctrine & Covenants*. But a careful look at Smith's prophecies in the *Doctrine & Covenants* shows that many of them didn't happen as he predicted. For example, Smith said *Doctrine & Covenants* 84:112-115 was revealed to him on September 22-23, 1832. It says,

And the bishop, Newel K. Whitney, also should travel round about and among the churches, searching after the poor to administer to their wants by humbling the rich and the proud. He should also employ an agent to take charge and do his secular business as he shall direct. Nevertheless, let the bishop go unto the city of *New York*, also to the city of *Albany*, and also to the city of *Boston*, and *warn the people of those cities* with the sound of the gospel, with a loud voice, of the desolation and *utter abolishment* which await them if they do reject these things, for if they do reject these things the hour of their judgment is nigh, and their house shall be left unto them desolate.

In the fall of 1832 Joseph Smith said, "I continued the translation of the Bible and ministering to the Church, through the fall, except for a hurried journey to *Albany, New York and Boston*, in company with *Bishop Whitney*, from which I returned on the 6th of November" (*History of the Church* vol. I, p. 295). That is the only time that LDS records show Bishop Whitney visited those cities, so it must have been to preach to them in fulfillment of *Doctrine & Covenants* 84:112-115. No other reason is given for going to those cities at that time.

If Whitney didn't preach to those cities he was disobedient. But if he preached to them, even at some other time, "The *people* of those cities" all died well over 100 years ago without embracing Mormonism, but they did not see their cities "abolished" or "left desolate" as this revelation stated. Those cities still exist and still have not embraced Mormonism, so was Smith's revelation from God? Smith was killed less than 12 years after he gave this prophecy and Whitney died 18 years after Smith's prophecy.

Joseph Smith claimed that *Doctrine & Covenants* 111 was revealed to him on August 6, 1836 while he, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith and Oliver Cowdery were in Salem, MA. The first four verses declare,

I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies. *I have much treasure in this city for **you***, for the benefit of Zion, *and many people in this city, whom I will gather out* in due time for the benefit of Zion, *through **your** instrumentality*. Therefore, it is expedient that you should form acquaintance with men in this city, as you shall be led, and as it shall be given you. And it shall come to pass in due time that *I will give this city into your hands*, that ***you** shall have power over it*, insomuch that they shall not discover your secret parts; and *its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours*.

Notice that this "revelation" is addressed to Smith and the three men who went to Salem with him. "The Lord" told them that He had "much treasure" in Salem for **them** and for **Zion** (in Missouri) and also *many people* whom He would gather out through **them**. "The Lord" also told them that *He would give Salem to them* so that they would have *power over it* and its wealth of **gold and silver would be theirs**. The *LDS History of the Church*, vol. II, pp. 464-466 shows that Smith and his associates were in Salem for about a month in August and September of 1836, but didn't get **anything** promised in this revelation. The heading of *Doctrine & Covenants* 111 even says, "When it became apparent that *no money was to be forthcoming*, they (Smith and his associates) returned to Kirtland" (OH).

This "revelation" raises some questions to think about: If the Lord really revealed this to Smith then He lied or He isn't all knowing. But if Smith didn't get this "revelation" from the Lord, he is a false prophet. Either way the Mormons have a serious problem. The God of the Bible is One Who knows all things (1 John 3:20) and doesn't lie (Titus 1:2). The Bible also declares that if a prophet prophesies and it doesn't happen, he is a false prophet (Deut. 18:22).

More false prophecies can be seen in *Major Problems of Mormonism* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, published by Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Box 1884, Salt Lake City, UT in 1989. Next time we will continue our discussion of Prophets in Mormonism.

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