

A GODLY RESPONSE TO FALSE PROPHETS

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In Jeremiah 28, Hananiah makes false prophecy that directly contradicts what God had revealed through Jeremiah regarding how long the people would reside in Babylon in exile. Jeremiah hears Hananiah's false prophecy and he responds. How can we learn from Jeremiah's response? What are some principles that we can glean as we live in days where false prophets abound?

I. Realization.

In the opening four verses, Jeremiah heard Hananiah, the prophet from Gibeon, speak in the house of the LORD in the presence of all the priests and all the people a word that was entirely untrue. False prophets arose in ancient Israel. And false prophets abound today. Just as men arose in antiquity who proclaimed what people's itching ears wanted to hear and proclaimed 'Peace, Peace!' even when there was no peace, nothing new has changed. False prophets have arisen all throughout church history and they exist in vast numbers today all over the world. The first reality that we must understand is simply the *realization* that false prophets do arise, do exist, to speak, and do proclaim their messages. Quite simply: *realize* false prophets exist today.

2. Faithfulness.

In understanding that false prophets arise and abound in our land, we can also see how Jeremiah responded in verses 5-9. This section marks him out as a man of faithfulness. The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of all the people and he spoke to him wishing that his words were in fact true. But they aren't. God had already spoken to Jeremiah and revealed that Israel would dwell in Babylon for many years, seventy to be precise (25:11-12). So Jeremiah faithfully reveals what he had said earlier in his prophecy: "the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, then that prophet will be known as one whom the LORD has truly sent" (cf. 23:28). He faithfully proclaimed God's Word. He did not veer away because of the longings of the people or to fit in with the false prophets and the widespread acceptance that they enjoyed. Rather, he faithfully heralded God's Word in season and out of season.

3. Patience.

Just at this moment, Hananiah approaches Jeremiah and takes a yoke from Jeremiah's neck and breaks it (v.10). Hananiah again assured the people publicly that the people would be subject to Nebuchadnezzar only two years (v.11). The word of the LORD comes again to Jeremiah and He commissions the faithful prophet to approach Hananiah again and patiently, faithfully, and diligently gave God's Word to the false teacher. Jeremiah told him that the people would serve Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah did not take matters into his own hands. He received God's revelation and faithfully heralded God's truth just as God had spoken it.

4. Warning.

Another lesson to be learned is the diligent and courageous warning that Jeremiah gives to the false meddler Hananiah. Jeremiah confronted him by noting that the LORD had not sent him and that Hananiah, by his false and cunning words, has made the people trust in a lie (v.15). After all, all false teachers lie to the people and cause them to trust in lies. So God revealed through Jeremiah that He would remove Hananiah from the face of the earth that very year (v.16). God promised that He would kill the false teacher because he 'counseled rebellion against the LORD' (v.16b). False teachers should be warned of divine destruction that will come upon them (cf. 2 Peter 2).

5. Trust.

In v.17, the text declares that Hananiah the false prophet died that same year in the seventh month. Not only did God's promise perfectly and faithfully come to pass (just as Jeremiah, the faithful herald, spoke) but God rid the earth of this particular false prophet. Jeremiah did not take revenge nor did he seek to harm the man. He simply warned him and trusted in the LORD for vengeance belongs to the Lord and He'll repay. What can we learn? Trust God. Speak truth. God will make it right, in His time.