

Prophets and Prophecy in Mormonism

By Marvin W. Cowan

Latter Day Saints' (LDS) Apostle Bruce McConkie wrote, "Apostles and prophets are the foundation upon which the organization of the true Church rests (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20.) Where there are no apostles and prophets there is no divine Church, but where these officers are found, there is the Church of Christ in all its glory, beauty and perfection" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 606.) On page 608 he said, "In this day and age true prophets will be members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Mormons often boast that they have a "living prophet" and they sing the LDS hymn "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" in their local wards and in their General Conferences. Mormons believe that having men who are called Apostles and Prophets is proof that theirs is the True Church. Any church could call certain men "Apostles" and "Prophets," but that wouldn't make them Apostles and Prophets, nor does it for the LDS. According to the New Testament, there are false prophets (Matt. 7:15; 24:11) just as there are false apostles (II Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2). How can one tell the true ones from the false ones? For Christians, the Bible has always been the guide in such matters.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 declares that if a prophet announces some miraculous sign or wonder and it actually happens, he is still a false prophet if he tells you to serve other gods. Deuteronomy 18:20- 22 also says if a prophet predicts something and it fails to come to pass, he is a false prophet even if he speaks in the name of God! Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, qualifies as a false prophet both ways. He taught that there are other gods and he predicted many things that didn't come to pass and can never come to pass because it is too late! We will give examples of that later.

Mormonism claims that Joseph Smith was only fourteen years old when God called him to be a prophet. But the Mormon Church can never again have a young prophet because "The senior Apostle is always chosen and set apart as the President of the Church" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 49). Thus, in order to become the only Prophet on earth who speaks for God in everything, LDS mention at least three things that are necessary: 1. He must be a member of the LDS Church; 2. He must be sustained as one of the Twelve Apostles; 3. After becoming an Apostle, he must live and serve longer in that office than any of the other eleven Apostles. Then when the current Prophet dies, he is chosen as the new President and Prophet of the LDS Church. Mormonism claims to be a restoration of the original church established by Jesus Christ, so they should be able to verify that method of choosing a Prophet with authentic historical and scriptural records, but no such documents exist.

Mormon leaders claim that God has always spoken through prophets and they often use Old Testament Prophets as examples. But did Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc. become Prophets the way LDS Prophets do today? No. They weren't members of the LDS Church. They never were Apostles in that Church or any other church. Nor did they outlive any Apostles in order to become Prophets. Thus, Mormonism's method of selecting their Prophet bears no resemblance to the way Old Testament Prophets became Prophets. Old Testament Prophets were Prophets because they prophesied, which is something LDS Prophets don't seem to do anymore! Joseph Smith prophesied many things and his earliest successors also prophesied a little. But for a hundred years or so, LDS Prophets have functioned more like Presidents of corporations and they have not prophesied anything

specific. When we have called this to the attention of LDS people they often reply, "Well, a Prophet doesn't always have to prophesy in order to be a Prophet." That is true, but surely he should prophesy sometime, or why call him a Prophet? The latest LDS "revelation" added to LDS scripture is the 1978 statement by LDS President Kimball about a revelation he said he had which allowed black men to have the LDS Priesthood, but it is not prophecy. Before that, the most recent "revelation" added was a vision of the afterlife which the sixth LDS Prophet, Joseph F. Smith, claimed he had in 1918. It was not published as a revelation until 60 years later when it was added to the *Pearl of Great Price* in 1976. Later it became Sec. 138 in the *Doctrine & Covenants*. It still was not a prophecy.

In 1976 Joseph Smith's January 1836 "vision of the Celestial Kingdom" was also published in the *Pearl of Great Price*. Later it became Sec. 137 in the *Doctrine & Covenants*. But for 140 years it wasn't considered scripture! Many Mormons lived and died during that time without ever knowing anything about it! This "revelation" has had some interesting deletions. The original that is now *Doctrine & Covenants* 137:5 said, "I saw Father Adam and Abraham and Michael—" But Michael has been deleted because Smith also taught that Adam is Michael in *Doctrine & Covenants* 27:11 and 107:54. Only the first half of Smith's "vision" became LDS scripture and it ends in the middle of a paragraph because the remainder is false prophecy! You can read the entire vision in the *History of the Church*, volume 2, pp. 380-381. This vision took place less than a year after the first Twelve LDS Apostles were ordained. In the last half of Smith's vision (which is not in the *Doctrine & Covenants*) he claimed he saw them in the Celestial Kingdom. By three years after this vision, half of those original Apostles had apostatized! So, how could he see them in the Celestial Kingdom when LDS claim apostates can't go there?

For more information about false prophecy in Mormonism we suggest *The Changing World of Mormonism* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, published by Moody Press.

Our next article will continue the study of false prophecy in Mormonism.