

# HANANIAH THE FALSE PROPHET

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Hananiah was an Israelite who lived in the time of Jeremiah the prophet. He was of the city of Gibeon in Benjamin, and was the son of the prophet Azur (Jer 28:1). He lived in a time when Jeremiah “sat alone” in speaking the truth to the wicked people of Jerusalem (Jer 15:17). The people loved to hear the prophets prophesy falsely and paid them well to say what they wanted to hear (Jer 5:31). Hananiah was one who was willing to speak lies in God’s name to please the people. He went to the temple, and in the presence of the priests and all the people declared that within two years the yoke of Babylon would be broken, all the captives would be returned from there, along with the holy vessels of the temple and King Jeconiah (Jer 28:1-4). In fact, it would only be five years later that the siege would begin that culminated in the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (2 Kgs 25:1-21). It would be *decades* before a remnant of the captives would return from Babylon (Ezra 1-2), and King Jeconiah would *die* in Babylon, his physical throne remaining permanently unoccupied (Jer 22:24-30; 2 Kgs 25:27-30). Clearly, Hananiah’s prediction of Israel’s future failed miserably, whereas Jeremiah foretold precisely what would happen without any inaccuracy whatsoever. A fundamental and vital lesson is to be learned in this contrast between true and false prophet.

## **Jeremiah’s response to Hananiah’s prophecy**

Jeremiah actually welcomed Hananiah’s version of the future (Jer 28:5-6), although he proceeded to remind the people that God’s pattern throughout Israel’s history was to send prophets to warn the people and to foretell of war, evil, and pestilence (Jer 28:7-8). It was not God’s way to comfort a rebellious people with sunny predictions of peace and prosperity. That was the way of the false prophets, like Hananiah. The truth would be revealed in time by whose prophecies were fulfilled. In Jeremiah 28:9, God’s true prophet said, “The prophet which prophesies of peace, *when the word of the prophet shall come to pass*, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.” This is one of the major tests by which we can distinguish between the word of God and the word of man.

## **A test to reveal what is God’s word and what is not**

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 says, “And if thou say in thine heart, How shall

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(continued)

we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, *if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken*, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” If a man’s foretelling of the future fails even one time, then he is revealed as a false prophet. Being 99% accurate with prophecies is not sufficient. By observing whose prophecies have been fulfilled 100% of the time without even a single failure, we “know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs” (Jer 44:27-30). God said that when His prophecies are fulfilled, “Ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it” (Ezek 17:21). “And when this comes, ye shall know that I am the Lord God” (Ezek 24:24; see also Isa 46:9-11; 34:16; 41:21-29; Ezek 6:13-14; 30:8; 32:15; 35:15). The New Testament tells us that fulfilled prophecies by Moses and John the Baptist about Christ reveal them as true prophets of God (John 5:46-47; 10:41-42). Fulfilled prophecy about his resurrection caused Christ’s disciples to believe his word (John 2:18-22). Jesus often used this method to build faith in his word. “Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he” (John 13:18-19). “And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (John 14:29).

## **The end of Hananiah**

“Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month” (Jer 28:15-17). Of course, that was only the beginning of his troubles. The end of those who listen to false prophets like Hananiah will also be extremely unpleasant. We had better not make a mistake in who we believe in. The bottom line is that only 100% accuracy in foretelling the future is a “passing grade” for a prophet. God and the Bible pass 100%, but no other beliefs or writings do. Only the 66 books of the Bible are the inspired word of God. Everything else is the word of man, no matter what any man claims.