

True and false prophecy essay sample



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How do you and I tell the difference between a true prophet and a false prophet? Through out the bible we are warned to watch out for false prophets. There are many traits in which a true prophet has that distinguish them from false prophets. Moses says in Deut 18: 15-22, “ The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. For this is what you yourselves requested of the Lord your God when you were assembled at Mount Sinai. You said, ‘ don’t let us hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore or see this blazing fire, for we will die. “ Then the Lord said to me, what they have said is right. I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him.

I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. But any prophet who falsely claims to speak in my name or who speaks in the name of another god must die. “ But you may wonder, ‘ How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the Lord? If the prophet speaks in the Lord’s name but his prediction does not happen or come true, you will know that the Lord did not give that message. That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared.” In the book Prophetic Conflict, the author states, “ If the narrow line between true and false prophesy is difficult to walk, and if God himself is in some sense responsible for false prophesy, is there a single criticism that can be applied to every situation so that either the populace can determine who has really stood in God’s council when he was not providing false words as a test? This is the question that G.

Quell raises, and the answer he arrives at is that only another prophet can distinguish the true prophet from the false. The fact that prophesy operates on two levels, the human and divine, that is, humans beings acting in the service of God, rules out all witness to authenticity save the inner testimony of a genuine prophet, according to Quell. Therefore, he writes that the prophet can neither be judged theologically nor juridically, but only pneumatically, and we are reminded that all err on the way to truth.” So if the only way to judge of prophet is spiritually and by other prophets, how can the public determine which prophet is true? Before we dive into the claim of Jeremiah verses Hananiah, who is the true prophet? Let look at the historical context that caused the very question to be raised.

According to Dr. Constable’s notes on Jeremiah, three of Josiah’s sons and one of his grandsons ruled Judah after his death. The first of these, though he was the second son, was Jehoahaz, who ruled for only three months in 609 B. C. The Judean people favored Jehoahaz, but Pharaoh Necho, who by slaying Josiah gained control over Judah, found him uncooperative.

Therefore, Pharaoh deported Jehoahaz to Egypt as a prisoner where he died (22: 10-12). God gave Jeremiah a few prophecies during this king’s brief reign. Jehoahaz’s older brother Jehoiakim succeeded him on Judah’s throne, thanks to Pharaoh Necho. He reigned for 11 years (609-598 B. C.). Jehoiakim was a weak king who changed allegiances between Egypt and Babylon whenever he thought a change might be to Judah’s advantage.

During his tenure Prince Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated the allied Egyptian and Assyrian forces at Carchemish thus establishing Babylonian supremacy in the ancient Near East (605 B. C.). Shortly thereafter King

Nebuchadnezzar, as he had become, invaded Palestine, conquered some cities, and took some of the nobles, including Daniel, as exiles to Babylon (Dan. 1: 1-3). Jehoiakim refused to follow Jeremiah's counsel to submit to the Babylonians. Instead he showed his contempt for the prophet by burning his prophecies (36). In *The Book of Jeremiah* by J. A. Thompson, the author states that King Jehoiakim is a loyal vassal to Egypt. Pagan practices were reintroduced in Judah and public morality was deteriorated. Prophets that resisted these tendencies were harassed and even put to death. Despite this, priests and prophets continued to assure the people that all was well. Jeremiah's exposure of the evil of all this led him into a deep personal persecution, even his own village Anathoth.

After removing Jehoiachin from the throne of Judah, the Babylonians replaced him with Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle. The intent was to have a puppet king who would be loyal to the Babylonians. However, the political and religious forces in Judah would not allow passive submission to a foreign power, even though Jeremiah had been preaching for 40 years that this was, indeed, God's will for the nation. The Babylonians had already devastated the nation, both physically and economically. After Josiah's death, Judah's territory had been considerably reduced, invading armies had decimated the countryside, and outlying cities destroyed. A considerable number of the nation's most valuable citizenry, those most capable of leading the nation in a crisis, had been removed to Babylon as exiles or more likely hostages to insure the continued submission of those left in Judah. Zedekiah was a vacillating leader, unable to chart a clear course of action or to withstand political pressures.

In 595, encouraged by prophets who in the name of God were promising a speedy return from exile (28), the deportees in Babylon attempted rebellion. Some of the leading prophets were executed and the rebellion quickly crushed, but the actions spawned rebellious thinking in Judah (29: 21-23). Encouraged by promised aid from surrounding nations, by 594 the remaining inhabitants of Judah were near open rebellion against the Babylonians. There, too, prophets like Hananiah (28), encouraged by those in Babylon like Shemaiah (29: 24-27), promised a quick end to the exile and a return to normal within two years. Jeremiah was apparently the only prophet who still advocated submission to the Babylonians as the only way for the nation to survive (27: 9-11). He denounced the other prophets because they had not “stood in the counsel of God” and therefore were bringing a false message of hope (27-28). (Bratcher)

With this situation, it is easy to see why people would rather listen to Hananiah as a true prophet over Jeremiah because Hananiah was “prophesizing” what the people wanted to hear rather than what God was instructing the people to follow through Jeremiah. As we will see, Hananiah mimicked Jeremiah and was perceived as a prophet.

The Jeremiah 27 opens with a superscription supplying a date and setting, after which there is a combination of narrative and divine oracles that report another circuit of preaching and symbolic action by prophet. The narrative is first person and there are six oracles and Yahweh is in third person. In verses 2-11, Jeremiah reports a divine directive to make a yoke and address foreign envoys. Oracle I, Yahweh is giving land to Nebuchadnezzar, his servant. Nations are to serve him, and then in the future, nations shall make him

serve. Oracle II, Nations are not serving Nebuchadnezzar will be punished by Yahweh. Oracle III, “ So you must submit to Babylon’s king and serve him; put your neck under Babylon’s yoke!

I will punish any nation that refuses to be his slave, says the Lord. I will send war, famine, and disease upon that nation until Babylon has conquered it. “ Do not listen to your false prophets, fortune-tellers, interpreters of dreams, mediums, and sorcerers who say, “ The king of Babylon will not conquer you.” They are all liars, and their lies will lead to your being driven out of your land. I will drive you out and send you far away to die. But the people of any nation that submits to the king of Babylon will be allowed to stay in their own country to farm the land as usual. I, the Lord, have spoken!” In verses 12-15, Jeremiah reports having spoken similar words to King Zedekiah (According to the Hebrew Bible, Zedekiah was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar II in 597 BC at the age of twenty-one.) Jeremiah says, “ bring your necks into the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.”

Oracle IV, “ And do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you: ‘ you shall not serve the king of Babylon.’ Indeed a lie they are prophesying to you, in order that” [Yahweh] should disperse you, and you will perish. In verses 16-22, Jeremiah reports having spoken to the priests and to all the people. Oracle V, “ Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you...’Look, the vessels of the house of Yahweh will be brought back from Babylon now shortly.’ Indeed a lie they are prophesying to you.” Jeremiah: “ Do not listen to them, serve the king of Babylon and live” if the prophets, let them pressure Yahweh not to send <https://assignbuster.com/true-and-false-prophecy-essay-sample/>

Jerusalem's remaining treasures to Babylon. Oracle VI, All remaining treasures in Jerusalem will go to Babylon until the day Yahweh brings them back. (Lundbom, PGS: 306-307) We know that Jeremiah is a prophet because he uses statements such as, "The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, and saying thus says the Lord." (27: 1-2) In Deuteronomy passage, God instructed the Israelites that He would put words in their (true prophets) mouth. And he (prophet) will tell everyone what I have commanded.

Jeremiah 28 is to be read with Jeremiah 27. There is cohesion between the two chapters reveals parallelism. The structure of these two chapters is built around a common theme of prophetic conflict. (Yates) It consists of six oracles. Part 1 opens with Jeremiah reporting on a specific date, "in that year," that Hananiah spoke to him before the temple audience of priests and people. Oracle I, Hananiah: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years time I will bring back to this place all the temple vessels brought to Babylon. (vs 2-3) Oracle II, Hananiah: Jeconiah and exiles of Judah who come to Babylon, I will bring back to this place...for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. (vs 4). Part 2, the narrator reports Jeremiah's reply; also Hananiah oracle response. (Vs 5-11) Oracle III, Hananiah: Even so I will break the yoke of the Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon within two year time from upon the neck of all nations.

Part 3, the narrator concludes, And Jeremiah the prophet went on his way. (vs 11) Part 4, the narrator reports that the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah at a later time; directive given to go and speak to Hananiah. (Vs 12-13) Oracle IV, Jeremiah: Yoke bars of wood you have broken, but you have made in their place yoke bars of iron. (vs 13) Oracle V, Jeremiah: A yoke of

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iron I have put upon the neck of all nations; they and the beasts will serve Nebuchadnezzar. (vs 14) Part 5, Narrator reports Jeremiah's discreditation of Hananiah: Yahweh has not sent you, and you; you have made this people trust in a lie. (vs 15) Oracle VI, Jeremiah: I will send you away from off this face of the earth, this year and you will die. (vs 16) Part 6, the narrator reports that Hananiah died two months later, in that year. (vs 17). Hananiah first two oracles are tied together by an inclusion (relationship between a noun in genitive case and head noun of the phrase) noted by Weiser as a repetition at the beginning and the end of his speech.

In oracle III, Hananiah repeats with a slight change the substance and wording of Oracle I. It has been widely noted that Hananiah uses the same messenger formula, some of the same language ("so I will break"), and the very same symbolic action used by Jeremiah. (Lundbom, PGS: 327-328) One might think that Hananiah was a prophet because he used phrases such as "Thus says the Lord" and as we see in the Deuteronomy passage that God said, any prophet that falsely speaks in My Name must die. And because we know the whole story, we know that Hananiah died because he was not a true prophet. However, before he died how would someone tell the difference? Matthijs De Jong talks about verses 8 and 9 in chapter 28. Verse 8 represents doom and verse 9 represents peace. "The passage authenticates prophecy of the first type and warns against prophecy of the second type.

The argument for authenticating prophecy of doom in v. 8 is based on precedent: from time immemorial prophets have delivered this type of prophecy. As a prophet of doom, Jeremiah belongs to this reliable tradition.

The argument against prophecy of peace in v. 9 is cast in the form of a warning against wishful thinking. Peaceful messages are attractive, but also deceptive. Therefore, people should wait and see whether the peace predicted really happens. If not, it was just another example of wishful thinking. Thus, Jeremiah claims authority for his own message of doom and warns the people of Judah against the message of peace delivered by Hananiah.” (De Jung, pg. 7-8) The author claims that in this situation in order to tell the difference you have to wait and see how it plays out. But what do you do in the mean time?

There is many ways by which the word of God comes to prophets. (Dreams, visions and music) And there are many types of prophets. (Royal, individual seers, and cultic) But the single factor that characterizes a genuine prophet, according to H. J. Kraus, is said to be an immediacy with God; the difference in this immediate contract with the divine council makes is illustrated by 1 Kings 22, where the opponents of Micaiah are said to have been dependent upon the Spirit sent by Yahweh for their message. Kraus continues with genuine revelation comes directly from Yahweh to Micaiah, while false prophesy is mediated to the four hundred by the Spirit. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, “ Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don’t want you to misunderstand this.

You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but

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the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit.

Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.” (1 Corinthians 12: 1-10) I want to point out what Paul has said, “ So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all.” The same Spirit that worked during the days of Paul is the same Spirit worked in the days of Micaiah and Jeremiah. With that said, there is a real difference between a true and false prophet, particularly the failure to proclaim the guilt of the people, to expose iniquity. This failure, according to Kraus, identifies the false prophet. (Crenshaw, pg. 21) Hananiah failed to expose the people’s iniquities.

Rather he spoke of what the people wanted to hear rather than what God needed them to hear. Micah speaks of the Spirit in this way, “ This is what

the Lord says: “ You false prophets are leading my people astray! You promise peace for those who give you food, but you declare war on those who refuse to feed you. Now the night will close around you, cutting off all your visions. Darkness will cover you, putting an end to your predictions. The sun will set for you prophets, and your day will come to an end. Then you seers will be put to shame, and you fortune-tellers will be disgraced. And you will cover your face because there is no answer from God. ” But as for me, I am filled with power with the Spirit of the Lord.” We can know that Micah was a true prophet because he is speaking to the iniquity of the people and has the “ right” Spirit upon him.

We know it is the “ right” Spirit because it is bring justice in the name of Yahweh. It’s not going against what God is, but calling out the sins of the people who are against God. In the same way that Micah calling out the false prophets of his day, Jeremiah is calling out Hananiah in the same way.

Hananiah (like the false prophets in Micah’s day) was leading the people astray by filling them with false hope about exile. In Paul’s final advise he tells us, “ Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other. Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy.

Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who

belong to Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil. Paul's advise is how the people should respond to prophets. If we know that a true prophet is aliened with God, points out the inequity of the people, stands in the divine council, receives his gift from the Holy Spirit, keeps the laws or doesn't contradict the Word of God, preachers of righteousness, fearless (isn't afraid of repercussions), predicts the future and is 100% accurate, and the conformity of the message to God's nature.

Jeremiah tested Hananiah prophesies because they didn't alien with what God had been prophesying to the people and in the end Jeremiah, (the true prophet) who prophesied that Hananiah would be die, came true. Jesus, warns us to be aware of false prophet or teachers in Mathew 7. Jesus says, "" Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act." Hananiah mimicked Jeremiah to a tee, with the exception to his fruit. He was not in divine council with God and it reflected in the way he acted. Hananiah was rebelling against God. We know that Hananiah was a false prophet because Yahweh had given the message through Jeremiah that a false prophet would come to give the false prophecies such as the ones Hananiah spoke of. (Jeremiah 27: 13-22). This is how the public can tell if a prophet is true or false.