

"False Prophet"? A Biblical Reality Check

If Your Standard Makes Biblical Prophets "False," Your Standard Is Wrong | Defending Joseph Smith with Scripture

THE CRITIC'S CLAIM

Deuteronomy 18:22: "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD and the message does not come to pass or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken."

Critics say: "If ONE prophecy fails, you're a false prophet. Joseph Smith had failed prophecies, so he's false."

PROBLEM: By this standard, **EVERY biblical prophet fails** — including Jesus.

THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE CRITICS IGNORE

Jeremiah 18:7-10: "If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned."

KEY: Most prophecies are **CONDITIONAL** — even when conditions aren't explicitly stated.

Maimonides (Jewish sage): "A prophecy of calamity might not come to pass if those who were threatened repented... as happened to the men of Nineveh. This does not disprove the prophet's prophetic character."

JONAH: THE CLASSIC "FALSE PROPHET"

The Prophecy (Jonah 3:4):
"Yet **forty days** and Nineveh will be **OVERTHROWN**."

What Happened: Nineveh repented. God relented. Nineveh was **NOT** destroyed in 40 days.

By critics' logic: Jonah = FALSE PROPHET

Biblical reality: Jonah is in the Bible as a **TRUE** prophet. The prophecy was **conditional** — Nineveh's repentance changed the outcome.

Jonah 4:2: Jonah *knew* God might relent — that's why he ran! "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a **God who relents from sending calamity**."

JESUS: "THIS GENERATION"

Matthew 24:34:
"Truly I tell you, **this generation** will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened."

Context: Jesus describes the temple's destruction, cosmic signs, His return in glory, and the end of the age.

Problem: Jesus' contemporaries died. The Second Coming hasn't happened. By critics' strict standard: **JESUS = FALSE PROPHET**

Evangelical explanations:

- "Generation" = the Jewish race (genea)
- Partial fulfillment in AD 70
- "This generation" = future generation seeing signs
- Dual fulfillment / prophetic telescoping

Point: They use flexible interpretation for Jesus but rigid interpretation for Joseph Smith.

NATHAN: DAVID'S ETERNAL THRONE

2 Samuel 7:12-16:
God through Nathan promises David: "Your house and your kingdom will endure **forever** before me; your throne will be established **forever**."

Problem: Solomon's kingdom split. The Davidic dynasty ended in 586 BC with Babylonian exile. No Davidic king has sat on a throne for 2,600 years.

Christian answer: "It's fulfilled spiritually in Christ."

Point: Why is spiritual/future fulfillment valid for Nathan but not for Joseph Smith?

ELIJAH: AHAB'S DEATH DELAYED

1 Kings 21:19:
Elijah prophesies: "In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up **your blood** — yes, yours!"

What happened: Ahab humbled himself. God **changed the prophecy:** "Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house **in the days of his son**." (1 Kgs 21:29)

Lesson: A prophecy explicitly changed due to the subject's response. God **modified** what Elijah said. Elijah wasn't "false" — prophecy is dynamic.

ELISHA: MOAB "DELIVERED"... BUT NOT

2 Kings 3:18-19:
Elisha prophesies: "This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also **deliver Moab into your hands**. You will overthrow every fortified city."

What happened (2 Kgs 3:26-27):
Israel was winning... then Moab's king sacrificed his son. "Great fury came against Israel" and they **withdrew**. Israel went home **without victory**.

Problem: Elisha said "Moab delivered into your hands." Moab was **NOT** delivered. By critics' standard: **ELISHA = FALSE PROPHET**

Scholarly explanations:

- Israel's lack of faith caused failure
- Human sacrifice changed the spiritual dynamics
- Israel failed to fully obey
- The prophecy was conditional on obedience

EZEKIEL: TYRE NOT DESTROYED BY NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Ezekiel 26:7-14:
"Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon... will ravage your settlements... plunder your wealth... demolish your fine houses."

What happened:
Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for **13 years**. The city was **not** destroyed. The army did **not** get the riches.

Ezekiel 29:17-20 (Ezekiel himself admits this!):
"Nebuchadnezzar... caused his army to labor hard against Tyre; yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre."

God's solution: He gave Nebuchadnezzar **Egypt instead** as payment.

Point: Ezekiel's prophecy about Tyre didn't happen as stated. Yet Ezekiel is a true prophet.

ISAIAH: DAMASCUS "CEASES TO BE A CITY"

Isaiah 17:1:
"See, Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a **heap of ruins**."

Problem: Damascus claims to be the **oldest continuously inhabited city** in the world. It has **never** ceased to be a city.

Evangelical explanations:

- Partially fulfilled in 732 BC (Assyrians)
- Still awaits future fulfillment
- "Ceasing" was temporary/regional

Point: Damascus still stands. Critics give Isaiah a pass but not Joseph Smith.

JEREMIAH: JEHOIAKIM'S BURIAL

Jeremiah 22:19:
"He will have the burial of a donkey — dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem."

What happened (2 Kings 24:6):
"Jehoiakim rested with his ancestors."

Point: Normal death, apparently normal burial. Not dragged outside the gates.

JOSEPH SMITH: PROPHECIES FULFILLED

1. Civil War Prophecy (D&C 87, Dec 1832):
"War will be poured out... **beginning at South Carolina**."
✓ Civil War began at Fort Sumter, SC (1861)
✓ "Southern states... call on Great Britain" — they did
✓ "Slaves shall rise against their masters" — happened

Philadelphia Sunday Mercury (1861): "Have we not had a prophet among us?"

2. Joseph's Name Known for Good and Evil (JS-H 1:33):
✓ His name is known worldwide — both praised and maligned

3. Saints Would Be Driven to Rocky Mountains:
✓ Fulfilled when Saints settled Utah

4. Stephen A. Douglas Warning (1843):
Joseph warned Douglas if he turned against the Saints he would "feel the weight of the hand of the Almighty."
✓ Douglas opposed Mormons, lost 1860 presidential bid badly, died shortly after

5. Book of Mormon Complexity:
✓ Chiasmus, Hebraisms, NHM/Nahom, accurate Old World geography, cement in Mesoamerica, etc.

THE DOUBLE STANDARD EXPOSED

When biblical prophets have "unfulfilled" prophecies:

- "It was conditional"
- "Dual fulfillment"
- "Spiritual fulfillment"
- "Future fulfillment"
- "We don't fully understand"

When Joseph Smith has similar prophecies:

- "FALSE PROPHET!"
- "One failed prophecy = fraud"
- No charitable interpretation allowed

This is intellectual dishonesty.

SUMMARY TABLE

Prophet	Prophecy	Issue
Jonah	Nineveh destroyed in 40 days	Didn't happen
Jesus	"This generation" sees end	2,000 years later...
Nathan	David's throne forever	No king for 2,600 yrs
Elijah	Ahab dies at Naboth's field	Modified by God
Elisha	Moab delivered to Israel	Israel withdrew
Ezekiel	Nebuchadnezzar takes Tyre	He didn't
Isaiah	Damascus ceases as city	Still a city
Jeremiah	Jehoiakim's shameful burial	Normal burial

DEUTERONOMY 13: "A DIFFERENT GOD"?

The Escape Hatch: "Even if Joseph's prophecies worked, he taught a *different God*!"

Deut 13:1-3: Don't follow prophets who say "Let us follow **other gods**."

Ask the critic: "Which other god do we worship? Ba'al? Molech? Zeus? Name one."

LDS worship: God the Father + Jesus Christ + Holy Ghost = **same three the Bible teaches**

Real complaint: "You believe God has a body!"

Response: Greek philosophy (Plato, Philo) said God is incorporeal. The Bible says:

- **Gen 1:27:** "God created mankind in his own image"
- **Ex 33:11:** God spoke to Moses "face to face"
- **Ex 33:23:** "You will see my back; but my face must not be seen"
- **Acts 7:55-56:** Stephen saw **TWO beings**—exactly like Joseph Smith

The LDS view is MORE biblical than the Greek philosophical view.

The "Different Jesus" Dodge:

- **John 17:3:** "The **only true God**, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" — Jesus distinguishes Himself
- **John 14:28:** "The Father is **greater** than I"
- **John 20:17:** "I am ascending to **my God** and your God"

If distinguishing Jesus from the Father = "different God," then Jesus taught a different God.

THE REAL TEST: FRUITS

Matt 7:20: "By their **fruits** you will recognize them."

Joseph Smith's Fruits: Restored knowledge of God, Book of Mormon, priesthood, temples, eternal families, 17M+ members, died as a martyr.

The Bottom Line:

If your definition of "false prophet" makes Jonah, Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nathan, and **Jesus Christ** all false prophets — **your definition is wrong.**

Apply the same standard to Joseph Smith that you apply to biblical prophets. You'll find he passes.