

Prophets Are Fallible — Cheat Sheet

calling, not personal infallibility.

CORE POSITION (ONE SENTENCE)

The Bible consistently portrays prophets as fallible human beings whom God calls and works through despite their errors — prophetic authority comes from divine

KEY FACTS

- Paul publicly rebuked Peter for doctrinal/practical error (Galatians 2:11) — the chief apostle was wrong and still an apostle
- Nathan told David to build the temple; God corrected him that same night (2 Samuel 7:3-5) — a wrong prophetic statement, then a retraction

- Paul explicitly distinguished his opinions from the Lord's commands (1 Corinthians 7:6, 12, 25) — the "speaking as a man" distinction is Pauline, not a Latter-day Saint invention
- Moses disobeyed a direct command and was punished but remained the greatest Old Testament prophet (Numbers 20:7-12)
- Deuteronomy 18:20-22 tests *specific predictive claims made in God's name*, not general personal infallibility

THEIR PROOF-TEXTS — AND RESPONSES

Verse	Their Claim	Response
Deut. 18:20-22	True prophets are never wrong	Tests specific "God said X would happen" claims, not personal inerrancy. Nathan would fail this test (2 Sam 7:3).
2 Pet. 1:21	Prophecy comes from God, not human will	Agreed — but this describes <i>prophecy</i> , not every word a prophet speaks. Paul made the same distinction (1 Cor 7:12).
Amos 3:7	God reveals secrets to prophets	Reveals — yes. Makes them omniscient — no. Revelation is progressive and partial (1 Cor 13:9).
Matt. 7:15-16	"By their fruits ye shall know them"	The fruits of the Restoration — temples, families, missionary service, scripture — speak for themselves.

BEST SCRIPTURES (PROPHETS ARE FALLIBLE)

- **Galatians 2:11** — Paul rebukes Peter: "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed"
- **Numbers 20:7-12** — Moses disobeys God, loses entry to Promised Land, stays a prophet
- **2 Samuel 7:3-5** — Nathan gives wrong guidance, God corrects him overnight

- **1 Corinthians 7:6, 12, 25** — Paul: "I speak this, not the Lord" / "I give my judgment"
- **Acts 10:9-16** — Peter holds wrong doctrine on Gentiles; God corrects through vision
- **Jonah 4:1-3** — Jonah disagrees with God's own decision
- **1 Kings 19:4** — Elijah asks God to let him die
- **Genesis 12:11-13; 20:2** — Abraham lies about Sarah — twice
- **1 Corinthians 13:9** — "We know in part, and we prophesy in part"
- **D&C 1:24-28** — Commandments given "in their weakness, after the manner of their language"

ONE-LINE RESPONSES

- **"If prophets can be wrong, why trust them?"** — For the same reason the early church trusted Peter after Galatians 2. Calling, not perfection, is the basis of authority.
- **"Biblical prophets were infallible."** — Nathan was wrong (2 Sam 7:3). Peter was wrong (Gal 2:11). Paul said some of his words were not from God (1 Cor 7:12). This claim does not survive the text.
- **"'Speaking as a man' is an escape hatch."** — Paul used the exact same distinction in 1 Corinthians 7. Is Paul using an escape hatch?

- **"Deuteronomy 18 disqualifies your prophets."** — Deuteronomy 18 tests specific predictive claims, not general inerrancy. By the inerrantist standard, Nathan, Peter, and Jonah all fail.
- **"How do I know when to follow the prophet?"** — Same way scripture prescribes: Holy Spirit (1 John 4:1), comparison with scripture, collective prophetic consensus, personal revelation.
- **"Your prophets contradicted each other."** — Peter and Paul contradicted each other in Galatians 2. Truth unfolds progressively (John 16:12-13), and correction is part of the process.

FURTHER READING

- [FAIR: Prophetic Infallibility](#)

- [FAIR: Speaking as a Man](#)