

Joseph Smith Jr.: Prophet? Or Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?

By: Elder James D. Bradley

What is the first word or thought that comes to mind when you hear the name Joseph Smith Jr.? If you are like most people, it would be "false prophet" or "wolf in sheep's clothing". My question to those who would respond in that manner would be: What makes him a false prophet or a wolf in sheep's clothing? Other than hearing some preacher say that, what have you read or seen that would convict him of those charges? I would ask those who responded in that manner: "What writings of his have you read or what particular element of his theological base is it that you have a problem with?"

Let's look at the charge of: Wolf in Sheep's Clothing.

What is the implication of such a charge? It is that someone would slip quietly in among the fold of believers and appear to be one of them, correct? The impostor would appear to be one of the flock, meaning that he would dress like the flock, talk like the flock (preach the same doctrines), and in general, behave just like everyone else in the flock so as to draw no attention to himself, correct?

How did Joseph Smith Jr. appear on the scene in 1829 when he established the church of Christ? Did he mouth the same doctrines as the Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and all the rest of the religions at that time? It might surprise the members of those various religions to know what their particular brand of faith espoused in that day. The answer is: No he did not preach the same doctrines as the rest of Christianity of that day did. In fact, his brand of theology was diametrically opposed to the teachings of that day.

Did he slip quietly onto the scene without any fanfare and meekly go about establishing his church? To the contrary. If you will search the records, you will see that he came onto the scene and immediately called all of the churches at that time an abomination in the eyes of God. So much for acting like one of the fold wouldn't you say? Not only did he say this from the rostrum of his own church, but he went into the various congregations upon invitation, and challenged and debated their leaders.

That is not something an "impostor" would do. An impostor would never bring attention to himself or his beliefs. He would quietly work in the background and gain the respect and support of the very people that he sought to draw away by trickery. He would never go boldly to the front and tell the people that they were wrong or misinformed. A "wolf in sheep's clothing" is not a charge that one could honestly lay at the feet of Joseph Smith Jr. They may not like him and they may not like his message, but they could not say that he snuck in among the flock appearing to be one of them. The verdict to this charge must be: **NOT GUILTY!!!!!!**

No, if the truth be known, the charge of "Wolf in sheep's Clothing" is the result of tradition. The religious leaders of that time period made that claim in an effort to deflect the charges that they were teaching doctrines that were contrary to what the Scriptures said. We will examine those charges in a moment, but the simple fact is, that it is the result of one generation passing on to the other generation what their preachers had stated as truth when all they knew was what they had heard from those before them. Most people who make the claim have never done the research necessary to come up with such a conclusion. Those who have researched have only gotten a one sided view of history.

Nearly all churches have been called upon to furnish information about themselves to those who publish the encyclopedias and history books of the nation. Yet in our case, it was to our adversaries and enemies

of the truth that the publishers turned to. Whenever you are different or peculiar in some aspect they always go to those who disagree with you for "the truth". The history books to this very day do not record the truth about facts surrounding Joseph Smith and claims that the churches at that time were teaching abominations. We will examine those claims next, but still, the Verdict to that charge remains: NOT GUILTY!!!!

Let's look at the charge of: False Prophet.

First, who were the sheep referred to in Joseph Smith's day? The Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and we would have to include the Catholics even though the fore-mentioned would not consider themselves aligned together. There were probably some others also but they were all of the same theological base at that time.

Now, what was the first thing that Bro. Joseph said that enraged these "sheep"? He stated that he was visited by angels of God and that they told him of the early inhabitants of America. That all of their history had been recorded on brass plates and that these angels showed him where these plates were buried. He told them that he was visited by these angels on a number of occasions where they told him of God's desire to restore his church in this land and that all of this was the fulfillment of Isaiah Chapter 29 & Ezekiel 37:15-28. (history shows that angels minister to the people of this world and we now are seeing scientific evidence of previous societies recording their history on brass plates-no fault can be found there. The evidence of the claim of personal contact with these angels will be validated in God's own time.)

Joseph declared that the promise of salvation after belief and baptism that Jesus proclaimed as recorded in Mark 16:16 to be just as binding today as it was in Christ's day. (no fault can be found here)

Joseph declared that the "signs" of that believer who had been baptized as promised in Mark 16:17&18 to also be valid and binding today as it was in days of old. (no fault can be found here)

Joseph declared that the doctrine that children were predestined to damnation, to be monstrous and an abomination. (no fault can be found here)

Joseph declared that the dogma that hell was a lake of fire and brimstone into which all who failed to become Christians were to be cast, and there to be tortured eternally, never finding release or cessation, to be a misrepresentation of Rev. 20:14. He showed that hell was but a prison house that unsanctified spirits were cast into between death and resurrection and that after the final resurrection hell itself should be cast into the lake of fire. (no fault can be found here)

Joseph declared that the death of the body did not end human probation, but that anyone who had not heard the Gospel while in the flesh, should be taught of the atonement of Christ. He proved with [Peter 3 :18-20,4: 5-6 & John 5:25 that Jesus Himself opened up the work of preaching in the prison-house. (Though this may be new to some-no fault can be found here)

Joseph declared on Bible authority, that every act of goodness would be brought into account in judgment. That every man would be rewarded or punished according to his works, some inheriting the "glory of the sun", others the "glory of the moon", and still others would differ in glory as the stars vary in magnitude(1 Cor. 15:41). He declared that man would be rewarded for his works not saved by his works, as recorded in James chapter 2. (No fault can be found here)

Joseph declared that the Jews would again come into remembrance, that the former fertility and glory would be restored to Palestine, that Israel and Judah would return there and be reinstated, and that, according to Isaiah 29:11-17, as interpreted and explained by the Book of Mormon, the day of that wondrous restoration was at hand. As history has shown, 23 years after the Book of Mormon was published, the early and latter rains returned to Palestine after a 1700 year absence and Palestine has

since become fruitful. Also in 1948 Jerusalem was restored to statehood and the Jews are returning to their homeland-no fault can be found here.

Joseph declared that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ would be as literal as His first. (no fault can be found here).

The list of prophetic utterings by Joseph Smith Jr. Could go on and on, and the results would be the same, (no fault can be found here).

What could the churches of that day have found to be so inflammatory about these proclamations by Joseph Smith Jr., that they would brand him as a heretic and cause them all to band together in their attacks on him?

After reading the aforementioned proclamations by Joseph Smith Jr. One has to wonder where the charges of false prophet and wolf in sheep's clothing came from. The message that was delivered by Joseph Smith Jr. In 1830 is still the same today. What has changed is the messages of the "other sheep", the Catholics, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Methodists and the other churches. For if you will look back to the time of 1830 all of these churches believed differently at that time.

These "other sheep" all denied angel visitation at that time. (they all now teach Joseph's version)

These "other sheep" all denied that these "signs" of the believers were literal. (they all now teach Joseph's version)

These "other sheep" all declared that children that died before baptism were consigned to purgatory. (most all of them now teach Joseph's version)

These "other sheep" all proclaimed that hell was the eternal lake of fire for all who had failed to become Christians. (most all of them now teach Joseph's version)

These "other sheep" all taught that those who never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel were consigned to burn in hell forever. (most all of them teach some variation of Joseph's version)

These "other sheep" all denied the belief in being rewarded for your works. (most all of them now teach some variation of Joseph's version)

These "other sheep" all taught that the restoration of Jerusalem was only to be a spiritual restoration, for anyone could see that it had laid barren for 1700 years. (23 years after the Book of Mormon was published they were all forced [by the literal return of the early and latter rains] to teach Joseph's version)

These "other sheep" all taught that the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, was to be a spiritual coming and not a literal coming in the flesh. (most all now teach Joseph's version)

The verdict to the charge of false prophet must be: NOT GUILTY!!!!!!

NOTE: Within 75 Years of these proclamations by the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. All of these "other churches" had adopted most, if not all of the teachings of the man that they had banded together against. They are the ones who changed their testimonies. yet they continue to label Joseph as the false prophet and the wolf in sheep's clothing when in fact it is they themselves who are found guilty of these charges.

We invite you to examine Joseph Smith Jr.'s writings and see that he is like all true prophets of God. He was a man inspired by God, nothing more, nothing less.