**Worshipping Other Gods**

In chapter 13, Moses continues his warning about the sin of idolatry. He told the people that they could be deceived by a prophet. Signs, wonders or miracles performed by someone thought of as a prophet would offer some measure of validation of the person’s authenticity. Once drawn in by the “prophet”, people would be vulnerable to being led on a path of worshipping false gods. Notice that Moses says “If there arise **among** you a prophet” (KJV) indicating that the false prophet would come from their midst, a fellow Israelite. His warnings in the previous chapter had been about Canaanites who were outside the tribes. An insider could potentially be more dangerous since there would be no natural suspicion. Moses told the people that they must not listen to such teaching and in fact, such a false prophet was to be put to death so that the evil could be purged from among them.

Moses presented a second source of false teachings, a relative who would be more difficult to resist. Matthew Henry wrote *“It is the policy of the tempter to send his solicitations by the hand of those whom we love, whom we least suspect of any ill design upon us, and whom we are desirous to please and apt to conform ourselves to. The enticement here is supposed to come from a brother or child that are near by nature, from a wife or friend that are near by choice, and are to us as our own souls.  Satan tempted Adam by Eve and Jesus by Peter.”* A ploy that Moses predicted was creating uncertainty about the existence of only 1 true God. A false prophet might say “Let us go and serve other gods, (gods that neither you nor your fathers have known). One who heard such an argument might think that their very narrow world view had prevented them from knowing about other gods that might be more powerful than God Himself. Again, Moses instructs that even a relative spreading such false teaching was to be put to death.

Next Moses addressed the possibility that an entire city could be led astray by wicked men. The KJV refers to them as children of Belial. Got Questions, Biblical Answers describes Belial as a term for a wicked person in the Old Testament but Belial is used as a proper name for Satan (2nd Cor. 6:15). In Jewish Apocryphal literature, Belial is described as an angel who followed Satan in his fall. Moses told the people that they were to diligently inquire about the truth of what was reported. Only when they were certain were they to take action which was to put the inhabitants of the city to death. Matthew Henry wrote that God Himself came down to see the evidence before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. They were told to burn the city and everything in it after which it could never be rebuilt as God would consider the site defiled.

God revealed to true prophets His judgements against false prophets (see Ez. 13:9, Jer. 14:14 and 23:16). Paul wrote extensively about false prophets (Acts 20:28-30, 2nd Tim. 4:3-4, 2nd Cor. 11:1-4). Jesus also warned about false prophets, saying that they would perform great signs and wonders to deceive (Matt 24:24), a warning repeated by Paul in 2nd Thessalonians (2:9-10). Finally Peter makes it clear that true prophecy comes only from God “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”. Again quoting Got Questions, Biblical Answers:

• A true prophet’s words will be fulfilled ([Deuteronomy 18:21–22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut%2018.21%E2%80%9322); [Jeremiah 28:8–9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer%2028.8%E2%80%939)).  
• A true prophet’s teachings are consistent with Scripture ([2 Peter 1:20–21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Pet%201.20%E2%80%9321); [Revelation 22:18–19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2022.18%E2%80%9319)).  
• A true prophet’s teachings will encourage righteous behavior and provide spiritual benefit ([Deuteronomy 13:1–4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut%2013.1%E2%80%934); [Jeremiah 23:13–14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer%2023.13%E2%80%9314), [32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jeremiah%2023.32); [Ezekiel 13:17–23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek%2013.17%E2%80%9323); [14:4–8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezekiel%2014.4%E2%80%938); [Lamentations 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lam%202.14)).  
• A true prophet’s life will reflect a divine call ([Isaiah 28:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2028.7); [Jeremiah 23:10–11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer%2023.10%E2%80%9311), [14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jeremiah%2023.14); [29:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jeremiah%2029.9); [Zephaniah 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zeph%203.4); [Matthew 7:15–20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%207.15%E2%80%9320)).  
• A true prophet will acknowledge Jesus Christ as divine ([1 John 4:1–6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%204.1%E2%80%936)).