

The Deceivers

The quality of the prophecies and insights he received through his guru convinced former New-Ager PER JOHNSEN that he was truly in contact with God. But the truth was different, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light

Among the most sought-after speakers on both the New Age and the Christian charismatic circuits today are those who produce 'words of knowledge' and personal prophecies. They can tell you your date of birth, provide details of your personal life, and almost disclose what you had for breakfast. This supernatural knowledge can gain such credibility for these 'prophets' and their 'prophecies' that they are accepted without weighing and testing.

But what is the source of this supernatural knowledge? Does it come from the Holy Spirit, a human spirit, or an evil spirit? The New Testament instructs us to test everything. It also warns us that in the last days many deceivers will come, displaying all kinds of counterfeit spiritual powers.

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During the period in which I was preoccupied with New Age activities (1978-83) I had the 'privilege' of having a clairvoyant (psychic) guru, with whom I had a very close personal relationship. He

was known as John Peniel, a name he claimed to have been given to him by an angel during a visitation. He was given the name John because he had been 'John the beloved apostle' in a previous incarnation, and Peniel because he had been Jacob, the founder of Israel. He was called to be a messenger of the second coming of Christ, in much the same way as John the Baptist had been for the first advent.

We both had a deep belief in reincarnation, as do nearly all New-Agers. Although John called himself a Christian philosopher and refused to be dubbed a New-Ager and a guru, that in fact was what he was. His key asset was an open channel to a guiding spirit that could talk through him at any time without him going into a trance. He could switch to the spirit almost instantly and the only noticeable



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difference would be a subtle change of voice, which became more mature and loving when the spirit spoke so that he sounded like a much wiser man. He wrote a book filled with this wisdom, called *777*, that contained seven hundred and seventy-seven short verses, not dissimilar in style to the Old Testament proverbs.

This spirit also gave a large number of prophecies through John. When the spirit used his mouth directly, John had little recollection of what was said. His own mind was suspended. Most of the time, however, he was given pictures which he interpreted on the spot, verbally or in writing. John declared that all his information came from God, either directly or indirectly, via his spirit. The New-Agers to whom he prophesied were overawed, fully convinced of the divine origin of his messages. His claim that a guiding spirit or angel acted as mediator made them even more plausible, because all New-Agers believe in guiding spirits.

John's personal testimony concerning his call into 'ministry' was impressive. He was completely overwhelmed when he first realised his high calling and the significance of his past lives, and he asked God for confirmation. He said that nothing less than an earthquake would do. That night he woke up to find the bed and the entire house shaking. Only a minor earthquake, it was more than enough to satisfy John of the authenticity of his calling to ministry from God.

John also received other convincing confirmations. One day in Dublin an eighteen year old girl, whom he had never seen before, came up to him and said, 'You have been Jacob

in another lifetime. I know it positively because I was Leah.' John was happy to receive this confirmation but less happy with the way she pursued him afterwards. He was more interested in meeting Rachel than Leah! Leah also pursued me, because John prophesied that I had been her eldest son, Reuben, in that lifetime!

The late American clairvoyant Edgar Cayce was called 'the sleeping prophet' because he prophesied in a trance. He produced a staggering amount of prophecies which today are kept in a research library at the Cayce Foundation, Virginia Beach, USA. His prophecies amounted to 15 million words in the period 1901 to 1944. Cayce was considered by many to be a Christian and he had a deep knowledge of the Bible, which he read through once a year. The majority of his prophecies related to biblical topics and many of them described living people's incarnations in Old and New Testament times. Cayce gave several prophecies about John Peniel and in 1934 predicted that John would appear at the end of the century as a messenger of the second advent of Christ.

John's prophecies were amazingly accurate in describing people's characters, habits and backgrounds. Virtually everything in the past and present was correct and to the point. On the future, however, he was not accurate. But he always had excuses: 'The prophecy was right, but the timing was wrong,' or, 'The prophecy was right at the time it was given, but it failed because the receiver deviated from God's will for him.'

I personally received a number of prophecies through John. I knew his reputation and the first time I met him during the winter of 1981 I asked him for a prophecy, or a so-called 'life reading.' He did not know me at all but he gave a one-hour prophecy which I recorded on tape. The character description of me was so accurate and detailed that I was convinced it just had to be from God.

From that moment I was hooked, and simply accepted unquestioningly his prophecies concerning my previous lifetimes and future events. A friend of mine who had just undergone psychiatric treatment said that John had uncovered as much in half-an-hour without talking with him as the psychiatrist had managed in three months of intensive interviews.

That first prophecy John gave me was a lengthy description of my personal situation, spiritual life and

character. Its accuracy convinced me beyond doubt that it was from God, I thought, because no-one else could know such things. This is how the prophecy ended (when speaking through his guiding spirit John always used the first person plural):

'We could make this three hours long and we would not begin to touch it. But we say that your life will become more active now, that the changes will come, that you will become more fluid and spontaneous. And we say that joy and peace is coming into your life for the first time ever. You have had much happiness, but happiness is on the outside. Joy and peace . . . come from the inside. An incredible joy and peace will come from knowing exactly why you are here and what you have to do. This will begin near the end of February and by the autumn you will know exactly what you are going to do for the rest of your life.'

'There will be no problems. No problems at all, because we say it very simply this way: God has sent you great help in this lifetime to do mighty works. Because you have worked for God for so many lifetimes in your way, quietly, persistently, we are going to see the light in you shine brighter than almost anyone can imagine. Certainly brighter than you can imagine right now. And many people will be quite amazed. You know God's people rise out of the masses. We could not spot them. They are not flashy . . . they are very quiet, humble people, who deeply understand. They even understand more than they understand. And when the moment is right, they rise out of the masses and they do the work that no other man can do, except them. Because the quietly persistent are the people who always succeed, you will succeed – there is no doubt about it.'

The prophecy ended on that note, and I wept. Was this really the way God saw me and wanted to use me? Me! I felt such a peace and joy and excitement. I could hardly believe it. My heart leapt with joy. I knew at that moment that I wanted to be around this man who knew such things. I wanted to learn more of his wisdom and to know all the secrets and mysteries of the universe that God had revealed to him.

It took me five years to discover that I was the victim of a great deception. I had to go through a breaking experience; it was like being set free from a spirit of bondage and

slavery that had brought my life to the edge of disaster.

I am now deeply concerned about some of the prophecies I have heard at some large charismatic conventions. To me they sound very similar to the ones being given by New Age gurus. The key elements are: 1. God is concerned with you personally. 2. He proves his concern by revealing personal details of your life to the 'prophet'. 3. You are more virtuous than you think. 4. You are specially chosen by God. 5. God has a mighty work planned for you. 6. Go and fulfil your calling with joy and peace, for God is with you.

The impact of this kind of prophecy is explosive in the highly-charged atmosphere of a large convention with the prophet holding centre-stage. It is a powerful emotional experience for the person who receives a mixture of prophecy, words of knowledge and personal details which convinces them that God is speaking to them.

Sadly, it can be another spirit. And once you have accepted that prophecy you have received an alien spirit into your life. In my case, it was undoubtedly Satan speaking. He knows all the tricks of the trade. He knows that it is when the emotional atmosphere is high that we are most vulnerable and are virtually certain to reach the false conclusion that 'this is definitely from God.'

The fact that false prophecy of this kind exists must result in a creative tension for Spirit-filled believers. The Lord told his disciples to take care that they were not deceived (Matthew 24:4) and warned that, 'Many will come to me on that day saying, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evil-doers!"' (Matthew 7:22,23).

But we also need to bear in mind the biblical encouragements to prophecy, which means to declare the word of God. Moses said he wished all God's people were prophets (Numbers 11:29), while Paul told the Corinthians to desire the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1).

The New Testament tells us not to treat prophecy with contempt but to test everything. The greatest need today is for a discerning people who can distinguish between truth and deception by their familiarity with the word of God in scripture.

