

It doesn't say, Are you a prophet? It says, Are you the prophet? KJV says, "Are you that prophet?" When it says "that" or "the" prophet, the people had an idea of a particular prophet who would come. John the Baptist said, I am not the prophet. What did they mean? Why did those people ask him, Are you the prophet?

We find the basis of it back in Deut. 18 as it approaches the end of Moses' life on earth people wondered, How can we know God's will after Moses departs from us. Moses was already about 120 years old. People said, That's getting to be quite a venerable age. How much longer can we expect him to be with us? How will we know God's will after Moses is gone? So in Deut. 18 we find Moses told them how they would know God's will after he was gone. In v.17, "The Lord said to me, What they say is good. They said, Let us not hear the voice of our Lord God any longer." They were overwhelmed by God's speaking the 10 commandments. It was a tremendous thing and frightened them terribly. They did not want to hear God speaking directly to them.

They said, We want to know God's will but we don't want any speaking that way that will terrify us. We could say the same thing. We want to know God's will, but we don't want to have to depend on some inner voice. I remember one time a woman came to a man and said, "The Lord has told me that you are to marry me." The man said, "If that's so I don't know why he hasn't told me!" We can be greatly deceived into thinking God has spoken directly to us. I do not say that God may not speak directly to somebody nowadays. But now we have the whole revelation, the Bible. It is not the normal thing for God to speak directly, because he wants us to get his message from the Bible. Study it.

When you think God has spoken to you, it may be true or it may represent your realization of what the Scriptural teaching is. Or it may be simply the result of something you heard or of some experience you had; some fear you've had. Or it may be the voice of the devil! For the devil can counterfeit God and mislead very much.

So the people wanted to know, How can we know God's will? We don't want to hear this terrible thing like we did when we heard the 10 commandments. We want to know exactly what God has to say to us. We are in the same position today, except instead of it being a terrible thing, it is a confusing thing because so many people say God has spoken to them when we feel sure he has not and they can easily be misled.

God said to Moses, I will raise up to them a prophet like unto you their brothers. I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him." God will raise up a prophet like Moses after Moses is gone. In the OT you have a succession of prophets. God raised them up. Very few of them were sons of prophets. It was not a hereditary thing. It was not an appointed office. It was not an elected office. God raised them up, but in some way He made it clear to the Israelites who were his true prophets because there were many false prophets who claimed to be prophets and were not at all. So the Jews in the time when Jesus came were looking for the coming of that prophet.